

Official Report of the
One Hundred Seventy-second
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 5 and 6, 2002

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Report of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 2002, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 5 and 6, 2002. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 5, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the general priesthood session and the Sunday morning session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and were made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live worldwide over the Internet.

General Authorities

First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

Presidency of the Seventy: Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David E. Sorensen, Dennis B. Neuenschwander,

Charles Didier, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., and Dieter F. Uchtdorf

First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Christofel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Steven E. Snow, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

Second Quorum of the Seventy: E. Ray Bateman, Douglas L. Callister, Craig C. Christensen, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, Duane B. Gerrard, D. Rex Gerratt, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, J. Kent Jolley, Spencer V. Jones, Gerald N. Lund, Dale E. Miller, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, Wayne S. Peterson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, D. Lee Tobler, William R. Walker, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 2002, at 10:00 A.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "Press Forward, Saints." President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many parts of the world.

We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at lds.org.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Press Forward, Saints" and will now favor us with "Secret Prayer." At the conclusion of the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Ben B. Banks of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Secret Prayer."

Elder Ben B. Banks offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Banks. It will now be our privilege to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"O that I were an angel"

My beloved brethren and sisters, we greet you again in a great worldwide conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Alma declared, "O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake

the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!" (Alma 29:1).

We have reached a point where we can almost do that. The proceedings of this conference will be carried across the world, and the speakers will be heard and seen by Latter-day Saints on every continent. We have come a very long way in realizing the fulfillment of the vision set forth in the book of Revelation:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (14:6).

What a tremendous occasion this is, my brothers and sisters. It is difficult to comprehend. We speak from this marvelous Conference Center. I know of no other building to compare with it.

We are as one great family, representatives of the human family in this vast and beautiful world.

The Nauvoo Temple—a crowning jewel

Many of you participated in the dedication of the Nauvoo Temple last June. It was a great and marvelous occasion, one to be long remembered. We not only dedicated a magnificent building, a house of the Lord, but we also dedicated a beautiful memorial to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

In 1841, two years after he came to Nauvoo, he broke ground for a house of the Lord that should stand as a crowning jewel to the work of God.

It is difficult to believe that in those conditions and under those circumstances a structure of such magnificence was designed to stand on what was then the frontier of America.

I doubt, I seriously doubt, that there was another structure of such design and magnificence in all the state of Illinois.

It was to be dedicated to the work of the Almighty, to accomplish His eternal purposes.

No effort was spared. No sacrifice was too great. Through the next five years men chiseled stone and laid footings and foundation, walls and ornamentation. Hundreds went to the north, there to live for a time to cut lumber, vast quantities of it, and then bind it together to form rafts which were floated down the river to Nauvoo. Beautiful moldings were cut from that lumber. Pennies were gathered to buy nails. Unimaginable sacrifice was made to pro-

cure glass. They were building a temple to God, and it had to be the very best of which they were capable.

In the midst of all of this activity, the Prophet and his brother Hyrum were killed in Carthage on the 27th of June 1844.

None of us living today can comprehend what a disastrous blow that was to the Saints. Their leader was gone—he, the man of visions and revelations. He was not only their leader. He was their prophet. Great was their sorrow, terrible their distress.

Feverish work to finish the temple

But Brigham Young, President of the Quorum of the Twelve, picked up the reins. Joseph had placed his authority on the shoulders of the Apostles. Brigham determined to finish the temple, and the work went on. By day and by night they pursued their objective, notwithstanding all of the threats hurled against them by lawless mobs. In 1845 they knew they could not stay in the city they had built from the swamplands of the river. They knew they must leave. It became a time of feverish activity: first, to complete the temple, and secondly, to build wagons and gather supplies to move into the wilderness of the West.

Ordinance work was begun before the temple was entirely completed. It went on feverishly until, in the cold of the winter of 1846, the people began to close the doors of their homes and wagons moved slowly down Parley Street to the water's edge, then across the river and up the banks on the Iowa side.

Movement continued. The river froze over, it was so bitter cold. But it made it possible for them to move on the ice.

Back to the east they looked for the last time to the city of their dreams and the temple of their God. Then they looked to the west to a destiny they did not know.

The temple was subsequently dedicated, and those who dedicated it said

"amen" and moved on. The building was later burned by an arsonist who almost lost his life in the evil process. A tornado finally toppled most of what was left. The house of the Lord, the great objective of their labors, was gone.

Rebuilding the temple

Nauvoo became almost a ghost city. It faded until it almost died. The site of the temple was plowed and planted. The years passed, and there slowly followed an awakening. Our people, descendants of those who once lived there, had stir within them the memories of their forebears, with a desire to honor those who had paid so terrible a price. Gradually the city came alive again, and there was a restoration of parts of Nauvoo.

Under the prompting of the Spirit, and motivated by the desires of my father, who had served as mission president in that area and who wished to rebuild the temple for the centennial of Nauvoo but was never able to do so, we announced in the April conference of 1999 that we would rebuild that historic edifice.

Excitement filled the air. Men and women came forth with a desire to be helpful. Large contributions of money and skills were offered. Again, no expense was spared. We were to rebuild the house of the Lord as a memorial to the Prophet Joseph and as an offering to our God. On the recent 27th of June, in the afternoon at about the same time Joseph and Hyrum were shot in Carthage 158 years earlier, we held the dedication of the magnificent new structure. It is a place of great beauty. It stands on exactly the same site where the original temple stood. Its outside dimensions are those of the original. It is a fitting and appropriate memorial to the great Prophet of this dispensation, Joseph the Seer.

Two temples stand as bookends

How grateful I am, how profoundly grateful for what has happened. Today, facing west, on the high bluff overlooking the city of Nauvoo, thence across the Mississippi and over the plains of Iowa, there stands Joseph's temple, a magnificent house of God. Here in the Salt Lake Valley, facing east to that beautiful temple in Nauvoo, stands Brigham's temple, the Salt Lake Temple. They look toward one another as bookends between which there are volumes that speak of the suffering, the sorrow, the sacrifice, even the deaths of thousands who made the long journey from the Mississippi River to the valley of the Great Salt Lake.

A plea for members to use the temples

Nauvoo became the 113th working temple. We have since dedicated another in The Hague, Netherlands, making 114 in all. These wonderful buildings of various sizes and architectural designs are now scattered through the nations of the earth. They have been constructed to accommodate our people in carrying forward the work of the Almighty, whose design it is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man (see Moses 1:39). These temples have been constructed to be used. We honor our Father as we make use of them.

At the opening of the conference, I urge you, my brethren and sisters, to utilize the temples of the Church.

Go there and carry forward the great and marvelous work which the God of heaven has outlined for us. There let us learn of His ways and His plans. There let us make covenants that will lead us in paths of righteousness, unselfishness, and truth. There let us be joined as families under an eternal covenant administered under the authority of the priesthood of God.

And there may we extend these same blessings to those of previous generations, even our own forebears who await the service which we can now give.

May the blessings of heaven rest upon you, my beloved brethren and sisters. May the Spirit of Elijah touch your hearts and prompt you to do that work for others who cannot move forward unless you do so. May we rejoice in the glorious privilege that is ours, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus."

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus."

We shall now hear from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

After the singing, Sister Coleen K. Menlove, Primary general president, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing "There Is Sunshine in My Soul."

Elder L. Tom Perry

Sacred duty of parents

The fifth article of faith states, "We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."¹

One of our most important priesthood callings, one that requires our constant attention, is in our families and our homes. Brethren, as fathers and patriarchs in our families, we are "by divine design . . . to preside over [our] families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for [our] families."

"Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and

fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations."²

The power of the priesthood

We live in a world that is crying for righteous leadership based on trustworthy principles.

In our Church we have been taught, in our own unique way, correct principles of leadership, directed by priesthood authority. I believe few of us realize the potential of the priesthood and the blessing it is. The more we learn about holding the priesthood and understand its operation, the more we appreciate the blessings the Lord has given to us.

John Taylor once declared:

"I shall . . . briefly answer that [the priesthood] is the government of God, whether on the earth or in the heavens, for it is by that power, agency, or principle that all things are [upheld and] governed on the earth and in the heavens, and [it is] by that power that all things are upheld and sustained. It governs all things—it di-

rects all things—it sustains all things—and has to do with all things that God and truth are associated with.

“It is the power of God delegated to intelligences in the heavens and to men on the earth; and when we arrive in the celestial kingdom of God, we shall find the most perfect order and harmony existing, because there is the perfect pattern, the most perfect order of government carried out, and when or wherever those principles have been developed in the earth, in proportion as they have spread and been acted upon, just in that proportion have they produced blessings and salvation to the human family; and when the government of God shall be more extensively adopted, and when Jesus’ prayer that He taught His disciples is answered, and God’s kingdom comes on the earth, and His will is done here as in heaven, then, and not till then, will universal love, peace, harmony, and union prevail.”³

The Lord gave us a vision of what the priesthood can be as He directed His Apostles, who were to carry on the work following His death. He declared to them, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”⁴

A priesthood quorum serves a widow

One of the blessings received from the priesthood is having the opportunity of belonging to a quorum. A quorum of the priesthood consists of a specific group of men holding the same priesthood office, organized for the more effective advancement of the kingdom of God.

President Stephen L. Richards at one time gave us a threefold definition of a priesthood quorum. He said a priesthood quorum is three things: “first, a class; second, a fraternity; and third, a service unit.”⁵

I was taught how a quorum works in these three aspects many years ago when I attended a high priests group meeting in a small community in southern Wyoming. The lesson that week was on justification and sanctification. It was evident, as the lesson began, that the teacher was well prepared to instruct his brethren. Then a question prompted a response that changed the whole course of the lesson. In response to the question, one brother commented, “I have listened with great interest to the lesson material. The thought has crossed my mind that the information presented will soon be lost if we do not find application to put the material presented into practice in our daily lives.” Then he went on to propose a course of action.

The night before, a citizen of the community had passed away. His wife was a member of the Church, but he had not been. This high priest had visited the widow and offered his sympathy. As he left the home after the visit, his eyes wandered over the beautiful farm of the deceased brother. He had put so much of his life and labor into building it up. The alfalfa was ready to cut; the grain would soon be ready to harvest. How would this poor sister cope with the sudden problems now falling on her? She would need time to get herself organized for her new responsibilities.

Then he proposed to the group that they apply the principles they had just been taught—by working with the widow to keep her farm operating until she and her family could find a more permanent solution. The balance of the meeting was spent in organizing the project to assist her.

As we left the classroom, there was a good feeling among the brethren. I heard one of them remark as he passed through the doorway, “This project is just what we needed as a group to work together again.” A lesson had been taught; a brotherhood

had been strengthened; a service project had been organized to assist someone in need.

Priesthood leadership in the home

Now these principles taught to us in the organization of a quorum apply not only to a quorum, but the same principles apply to the priesthood leadership in the home. We are under divine command to "bring up [our] children in light and truth."⁶ If fathers do not raise their children in light and truth, then the Lord is displeased with them. This is the message:

"But verily I say unto you, my servant . . . , you have continued under . . . condemnation;

"You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.

"And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house, for there are many things that are not right in your house."⁷

The Church must retain its family-based orientation. We need to teach the concept of building successive generations of members who are married in the temple and faithful. We need to teach basic doctrines and understand the relationship between personal spiritual growth and that of the family. We need to make the outcome clear: inviting members to come unto Christ and endure to the end.

Marriage is ordained of God

Among the first instructions given to man and woman was, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh."⁸

God, in His divine plan, ordained marriage to bring about His basic organizational unit—the family. One of the first

principles He taught Adam and Eve was to develop a working relationship. The scripture states:

"And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence.

"And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord."⁹

Then the Lord instructed our first earthly parents to teach their children about obedience to His laws, "and Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters."¹⁰

Formula for an eternal family

President Spencer W. Kimball has taught us about the eternal nature of the family:

"The formula is simple; the ingredients are few, though there are many amplifications of each.

"First, there must be the proper approach toward marriage, which contemplates the selection of a spouse who reaches as nearly as possible the pinnacle of perfection in all the matters that are of importance to the individuals. Then those two parties must come to the altar in the temple realizing that they must work hard toward this successful joint living.

"Second, there must be great unselfishness, forgetting self and directing all of the family life and all pertaining thereunto to the good of the family, and subjugating self.

"Third, there must be continued courting and expressions of affection, kindness, and consideration to keep love alive and growing.

"Fourth, there must be complete living of the commandments of the Lord as defined in the gospel of Jesus Christ."¹¹

Homes should be an anchor, a safe harbor, a place of refuge, a happy place where families dwell together, a place where children are loved. In the home, parents should teach their children the great lessons of life. Home should be the center of one's earthly experience, where love and mutual respect are appropriately blended.

You can have this house—or a father

Second only to the importance of being eternal companions is being an earthly parent. Fathers and mothers need to consider their roles in this great responsibility. My children taught me a great lesson many years ago. Our family had moved from California to New York, where I had accepted a position with a new company. We began the process of finding a new home by looking in communities closest to the city. Gradually, however, we moved farther away from the city to find a home in a neighborhood that suited our needs. We found a beautiful home some distance from New York City. It was a one-story house nestled in the lovely deep woods of Connecticut. The final test before purchasing the home was for me to ride the commuter train into New York and check the time and see how long the commute would take. I made the trip and returned quite discouraged. The trip was one and one-half hours each way. I walked into our motel room where our family was waiting for me and presented to my children a choice.

"You can have either this house or a father," I said. Much to my surprise they responded, "We will take the house. You are never around much anyway." I was devastated. What my children were telling me was true. I needed to repent fast. My children needed a father who was home more. Eventually we reached a compro-

mise and bought a home closer to the city, with a much shorter commute. I changed my work habits to allow me to have more time with my family.

Throughout the ages the Lord has commanded His people to teach their children truth and righteousness. We encourage you to gather your families around you for family prayer, gospel study, family work, and family activities. We urge you to counsel with your family members and encourage them to participate in the important decisions like planning family activities.

Use the priesthood to bless family, others

President Brigham Young taught that "the Priesthood . . . is [the] perfect order and system of government, and this alone can deliver the human family from all the evils which now afflict its members, and insure them happiness and felicity hereafter."¹²

We have been given the great power of the priesthood. It blesses us individually and provides blessings for our family; it blesses the quorums to which we belong; it blesses the congregations in which we are called to serve; and it even blesses the world in which we live. We need to learn how to righteously follow the doctrines and teachings the Lord has given to us as bearers of His holy priesthood. We are counseled:

"Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence. He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand."¹³

May the Lord bless us, as members of His Church, that we may realize what a blessing it is to have the priesthood on earth and to be able to use it for the benefit of our families and of all mankind. May we grow to understand our relationship to God our Eternal Father and the priest-

hood He has given to us is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:5.
2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
3. "On Priesthood," *Improvement Era*, June 1935, 372.
4. John 15:16.

5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1938, 118.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 93:41–43.
8. Moses 3:24.
9. Moses 5:4–5.
10. Moses 5:12.
11. *Marriage and Divorce* (1976), 17–18.
12. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 130.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99–100.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Pioneers are our spiritual ancestors

What a joy and privilege it is to be part of this worldwide Church and be taught and uplifted by prophets, seers, and revelators! This conference is being broadcast to 68 countries and translated into 55 languages. This is truly a global Church, with members spread across the nations of the earth. We are all children of a living and loving God, our Heavenly Father. I express my love to you, my dear brothers and sisters.

Just three months ago we joined under the inspired leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley in the dedication of the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple. It brought us back to the Prophet Joseph and renewed our memories of the early Saints—their sacrifices, sorrows, and tears, but also their courage, faith, and trust in the Lord. I have no ancestors among the 19th-century pioneers. However, since the first days of my Church membership, I have felt a close kinship to those early pioneers who crossed the plains. They are my spiritual ancestry, as they are for each and every member of the Church, regardless of nationality, language, or culture. They have established not only a safe place in the West but also a spiritual foundation for the building of the kingdom of God in all the nations of the world.

Gospel brings spiritual refuge after war

As the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is now being embraced around the world, we are all pioneers in our own sphere and circumstance. It was in the turmoil of post-World War II Germany when my family first learned about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. George Albert Smith was the President then. I was only a young child, and we had lost all material belongings twice within only seven years. We were refugees with an uncertain future. However, during those same seven years, we gained more than any amount of money could ever buy. We found a supernal refuge, a place of defense from despair—the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and His Church, led by a true and living prophet.

During this time of my childhood I played in bombed-out houses and grew up with the ever-present consequences of a lost war and the awareness that my own country had inflicted terrible pain on many nations during the horrific World War II.

The good news that Jesus Christ has made the perfect Atonement for mankind, redeeming all from the grave and rewarding each individual according to his or her works, was the healing power which brought hope and peace back into my life.

Whatever our challenges in life may be, our burdens may become light if we not only believe in Christ, but also believe in His ability and His power to cleanse and console our lives, and if we accept His peace.

Prophets and Apostles gave strength

President David O. McKay was the prophet during my teenage years. I seemed to know him personally: I could feel his love, kindness, and dignity; he gave me confidence and courage in my young life. Even though I grew up thousands of miles away in Europe, I felt he trusted me, and I did not want to disappoint him.

Another source of strength was a letter written by the Apostle Paul while he was in prison, addressed to Timothy, his trusted assistant and friend. He wrote:

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord” (2 Timothy 1:7–8).

These words from one of the ancient Apostles of our Savior rang with great importance for me in postwar times, even as they do today. Yet how many of us permit our fears to take control in this time of international tension, economical and political uncertainties, and personal challenges.

God speaks to us through prophets

God is speaking to us in a consistent voice. He will deal with all the human family equally. We might be in a large ward or a small branch, our climate or vegetation may differ, the cultural background and language might vary, and the color of our skin could be totally different. But the universal power and blessings of the restored gospel are available to all, irrespective of culture, nationality, political system, tradition, language, economic environment, or education.

Today we have again apostles, seers, and revelators who are watchmen on the tower, messengers of supernal, healing truth. God speaks to us through them. They are profoundly aware of the different circumstances we members are living in. They are in this world but not of this world.

We have a living prophet on the face of the earth, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. He knows our challenges and fears. He has inspired answers. A year ago he taught us in his optimistic and clear way. He said:

“There is no need to fear. We can have peace in our hearts and peace in our homes. We can be an influence for good in this world, every one of us.”

“Our safety lies in repentance. Our strength comes of obedience to the commandments of God” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 74).

The prophets speak to us in the name of the Lord and in plainness. As the Book of Mormon confirms, “the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding” (2 Nephi 31:3).

Follow prophets’ inspired counsel

It is our responsibility not only to listen but also to act upon His word, that we may claim the blessings of the ordinances and covenants of the restored gospel. He said, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10).

There may be times when we may feel overwhelmed, hurt, or on the edge of discouragement as we are trying so hard to be perfect members of the Church. Be assured, there is balm in Gilead. Let us listen to the prophets of our day as they help us to focus on the things that are central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal des-

tiny of His children. The Lord knows us, He loves us, He wants us to succeed, and He encourages us by saying:

"And see that all . . . things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that [men or women] should run faster than [they have] strength. . . . [But] it is expedient that [they] should be diligent" (Mosiah 4:27).

Are we diligent in living the commandments of God without running beyond our strength? Or are we just leisurely strolling along? Are we using our time, talents, and means wisely? Are we focused on the things which matter most? Are we following the inspired counsel of the prophets?

Prophets' counsel about families

One example of great importance for humanity is strengthening our own families. The principle of family home evening was given to us in 1915. President McKay reminded parents again in 1964 that "no other success can compensate for failure in the home" (quoting J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* [1924], 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5). In 1995 the prophets of our day called upon all the world to strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society. And only three years ago the First Presidency

and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles lovingly stated:

"We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform" (First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999; quoted in *Ensign*, June 1999, 80).

Renew commitment to following prophets

Let us in humility and faith refresh our dedication and our commitment to follow the prophets, seers, and revelators in all diligence. Let us listen and be instructed and edified by those who hold all the keys of the kingdom. And as we attend this conference, may our hearts be changed, that there will be a great desire to do good (see Alma 19:33), and that we will be pioneers in building a spiritual foundation that will establish the Church in our part of the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang
"Come, O Thou King of Kings."

Sister Coleen K. Menlove

A voice of gladness and hope

I like exclamation marks! I use them often when writing notes to myself and to others. It is a way to show enthusiasm and commitment. One of my favorite scriptures is punctuated with an exclamation mark: "Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness!"

There are 14 more exclamation marks in the rest of the verse and the next four verses that follow. They read in part:

"A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; . . . a voice of . . . glad tidings of great joy. . . .

" . . . Glorious is the voice we hear from heaven, proclaiming in our ears, glory, and salvation . . . !" ¹—with an exclamation mark.

We can hear a voice of gladness that brings exclamations of hope and joy into our lives. The joy of our testimonies of the Savior can punctuate every aspect of our lives as we seek to come unto Christ.

Bring up children in light and truth

What about our children? Do they hear exclamations of joy and hope in the gospel? After a Primary lesson about Joseph Smith's First Vision, the class was asked to draw pictures to take home and share with their families. The children had been taught about the darkness Joseph experienced before the appearance of the Father and the Son. A six-year-old girl picked up a black crayon and started to draw. She colored the bottom and up one side of the page as dark as she could. When her teacher asked her about the picture, she said she was drawing Joseph Smith in the darkness.

Her teacher inquired, "Do you know that when Heavenly Father and Jesus appeared, all the darkness had to leave? Heavenly Father and Jesus are always more powerful than Satan, and They will protect you." The child turned back to her paper. In the top corner, she drew an outline of two figures; and then, trading her black crayon for a bright yellow one, she filled the rest of the page with light.

It is this light, the light of the restored gospel—a "voice of gladness"—that parents can help their children come to know. The adversary is real, but children can feel the peace and the joy that come as they exercise faith in Jesus Christ. Our children will not experience this light unless we teach them the gospel.

The Lord directed parents to "bring up [their] children in light and truth."² He also instructed us to teach our children "to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord,"³ and "to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ . . . and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost."⁴ We help tune their ears, minds, and hearts to

recognize "a voice of gladness" and desire to be worthy to obtain eternal joy when we teach the truths of the gospel.

This is exemplified in the Book of Mormon. Enos's father taught him "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This great blessing caused Enos to proclaim, "Blessed be the name of my God for it."⁵ Enos then explains, "The words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart."⁶

A mother teaches of Christ

A friend shared an experience she had as a small child in a branch of the Church where she was the only child of Primary age. Week after week, her mother held home Primary on the same day and at the same time. She eagerly anticipated sitting on the sofa with her mother and learning the gospel of Jesus Christ and how to live it. Minutes carefully recorded by her mother in a notebook revealed that the home Primary meetings always included prayers, songs, and a lesson.

The desire of this mother's heart was for her little daughter to develop a testimony of Jesus Christ and to feel the joy of the gospel. She provided her daughter with what had been so important to her as a child. This little girl, now a woman of faith and covenant, looks back on her childhood with deep appreciation for her mother's enthusiasm and commitment to teach her of the Savior. This mother's diligence became her daughter's delight—with an exclamation mark!

Give highest priority to family

Living prophets are clear regarding our sacred duty to teach our children.⁷ In a letter issued by the First Presidency, we are instructed "to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activ-

ities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform.”⁸

Yes, life can be fast-paced for parents and is becoming so for children. It would be easy to say there is not enough time to fit everything in. Looking back at a time that passed all too quickly, I can now see that each day was filled with precious little moments full of opportunity to help our children hear the “voice of gladness” in the gospel. Children are always learning from us. They are learning what is important by what we choose to do, as well as what we choose not to do. Casual, infrequent family prayers, scripture study, and family home evenings will not be enough to fortify our children. Where will children learn the gospel and standards such as chastity, integrity, and honesty if not at home? These values can be reinforced at church, but parents are the most capable and most effective in teaching them to their children.

Helps in teaching children

Understanding who these children are and their potential in God’s kingdom can help us have a greater desire to meet the challenges more patiently—more lovingly. The Lord will help us teach our children if we will do all that is within our power. Families are forever, and the Savior wants us to succeed. As we seek the Spirit, we can receive the comfort, guidance, and reassurance we need to fulfill the responsibilities and receive the blessings of parenthood.

The divinely inspired programs of the Church and those called to minister to our children can help us. My husband and I are grateful for bishops, priesthood and auxiliary leaders, and home and visiting teachers who helped strengthen our family. Whether we have children in our own home or not, each of us can play an important part in assisting parents.

Children teach their parents

Children are so capable of learning the significant things of the kingdom. As we listen to them, we can better understand how they are applying what they are learning about the gospel. A father explained to his four-year-old daughter that the family had spent most of the day cleaning the house and every room was clean except one.

“Do you know which room is not clean?” he asked her.

“Mine,” she quickly replied.

“Do you know anyone who could help clean your room?” he asked, expecting her to answer that she could.

Instead she replied, “Well, Daddy, I know that any time you are scared, worried, or need help, you can get down on your knees and ask Heavenly Father to help.”

It is interesting to note that as we listen to our children, they can also teach us. A father shared an experience he had with his eight-year-old daughter. He said:

“While I was contemplating remarks for my sacrament meeting talk on ‘Becoming like Little Children,’ I asked my daughter why we needed to become like little children. She responded, ‘Because we are all little children compared to Jesus, and because little children have a good imagination.’”

Surprised by the last part of her answer, he asked why we need a good imagination. She replied, “So we can imagine Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, and when we take the sacrament we can think about Him.”

The Savior’s example of loving children

As in all things, the Savior set the example in how we should love and teach our children. When He appeared to the Nephites in the Western Hemisphere, the scriptures tell us that as He spoke to the people, “he wept, . . . and he took their lit-

tle children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.”⁹

Referring to this occasion, President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “There is no more tender and beautiful picture in all of sacred writing than this simple language describing the love of the Savior for little children.”¹⁰

Invite the Spirit for teaching to be effective

The key to accomplishing effective gospel teaching in the home is to invite the Spirit of the Lord to be with us. Some of the best counsel my husband and I received during some turbulent times of raising our children was to do all that is possible to invite and keep the Spirit in our home. Children cannot learn spiritual things and have spiritual feelings without the guidance of the Spirit.

As parents, we can share our testimony of Jesus Christ with our children often. The bearing of testimony, whether during family home evening or in a teaching moment, will invite the Spirit. President Boyd K. Packer also instructs us to “teach our young people to bear testimony—to bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, that the Book of Mormon is true.”¹¹

President Hinckley reassures us: “Of all the joys of life, none other equals that of happy parenthood. Of all the responsi-

bilities with which we struggle, none other is so serious. To rear children in an atmosphere of love, security, and faith is the most rewarding of all challenges.”¹²

I know—with an exclamation mark—that children can receive a witness by the Spirit that brings conviction and commitment to their hearts! I bear witness that this is our charge, this is our opportunity: to diligently teach and testify to our children of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that they might also hear the “voice of gladness.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 128:19, 23; see also verses 20–22.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
5. Enos 1:1.
6. Enos 1:3.
7. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999; quoted in *Ensign*, June 1999, 80.
9. 3 Nephi 17:21.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 74; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54.
11. *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* (1991), 154.
12. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 74; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

True disciples maintain faith

In the churn of crises and the sinister swirl of global events, true disciples will maintain faith in a revealing, loving God and in His plan for redeeming His children, which plan is the *why* of *all* that God does! (see Moses 1:39). Furthermore, God’s character, as revealed to us, tells us that He has the cosmic capacity to ensure

that He really is “able” to do His immense work (see 2 Nephi 27:20–21; Joseph Smith Translation, Isaiah 29:22–23).

True disciples will also maintain faith in His atoning Son, Jesus Christ, and, by being “converted unto the Lord” (3 Nephi 1:22), will be steadily undergoing a happy and “mighty change” (Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14).

Actually, brothers and sisters, Jesus is already victorious in the greatest battle anyway: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; *I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33; italics added). The Atonement was accomplished, bringing a universal resurrection to billions and billions, lifting all from the grave—regardless of how and when we got there! Therefore, on a clear night, though we see stars of incomprehensible longevity, they are not immortal. But, thankfully, we are!

Likewise, “true believers” (4 Nephi 1:36) will maintain faith in the latter-day Restoration with its empowering visitations, its prophets and apostles, and its “plain and precious” scriptures (1 Nephi 13:29). The gospel’s first principles surely fit the last days.

Ironically, as the restored Church comes “out of obscurity,” what seem to be stern challenges will actually disclose further the distinctiveness of the Church (D&C 1:30). Nevertheless, matching our behavior more closely with our beliefs will bring relentless reminders about the ongoing duties of discipleship.

The gospel edifies and lifts us

The restored gospel is buoyant, wide, and deep—beyond our comprehension. It edifies, whether concerning divine design in the universe or stressing the importance of personal chastity and fidelity. Only meek disciples can safely handle such a bold theology.

With scriptures to anchor and reassure us, we too can “look unto God . . . and he will *console [us]* in [our] afflictions” (Jacob 3:1; italics added).

We too can be “*supported under trials and troubles of every kind, yea, . . . he will still deliver [us]*” (Alma 36:27; italics added; see also verse 3).

For the Lord has said, “I will be in your midst” (D&C 49:27). “I will lead you along” (D&C 78:18).

Furthermore, God will give us priceless, personal assurances through the Holy Ghost (see John 14:26; D&C 36:2). Whether in tranquil or turbulent times, our best source of comfort is the Comforter.

Enoch wept over the wickedness in his time, and at first he “[refused] to be comforted” (Moses 7:44; see also verse 41). But then came revelations, successively showing Jesus redeeming the world, the latter-day Restoration, and the Second Coming. Enoch was told to “lift up [his] heart, and be glad” (Moses 7:44). The doctrines and revelations can likewise lift us—even amid “wars and rumours of wars” (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7; see also 1 Nephi 12:2; Mormon 8:30; D&C 45:26). Thus we need not grow weary in our minds (see Hebrews 12:3; D&C 84:80).

Trials can increase our capacity

Our discipleship need not be dried out by discouragement or the heat of the day, nor should dismaying societal symptoms “weigh [us] down” (Moroni 9:25), including “in-your-face” carnal confrontiveness (see Alma 32:38).

We may shrink from some things in the current human scene, but Jesus did not shrink in Gethsemane nor on Calvary. Instead, He “finished [His] preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:19).

Regarding trials, including of our faith and patience, there are no exemptions—only variations (see Mosiah 23:21). These calisthenics are designed to increase our capacity for happiness and service. Yet the faithful will not be totally immune from the events on this planet. Thus the courageous attitudes of imperiled Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are worthy of emulation. They knew that God could rescue them. “But if not,” they vowed, they would still serve God anyway (see Daniel 3:16–18). Similarly, keeping the unfashionable but imperative first and seventh

commandments can reflect the courage which three young women displayed anciently; they said no with their lives (see Abraham 1:11).

Therefore, we can be troubled on every side, but nothing can really separate us from the love of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 4:8; Romans 8:35–39); worldly anxieties are not part of being “anxiously engaged” (D&C 58:27). Even so, as Peter urged, we can and should cast our cares upon the Lord because He surely cares for us! (see 1 Peter 5:7). Oh, brothers and sisters, the awaiting emancipation of such trusting surrender!

Repent to remedy mistakes

As to remedying our personal mistakes, we face no hindering traffic jams on the road of repentance. It is a toll road, not a freeway, and applying Christ's Atonement will speed us along.

There may need to be plain-speaking Jethros in our lives to stretch us (see Exodus 18:14–24) or moments of stark realization, as with the original Twelve, who rightly concluded: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

Besides, unless we are filled with resolve, what will we say to the heroes and heroines of Martin's Cove and the Sweetwater? That “we admire you, but we are reluctant to wade through our own rivers of chilling adversity”?

God oversees vast work, knows each of us

Brothers and sisters, by divine appointment, “these are [our] days” (Helaman 7:9), since “all things must come to pass in their time” (D&C 64:32). Moreover, though we live in a failing world, we have not been sent here to fail.

Recall the new star that announced the birth at Bethlehem? It was in its precise orbit long before it so shone. We are likewise placed in human orbits to illumi-

nate. Divine correlation functions not only in the cosmos but on this planet too. After all, the Book of Mormon plates were not buried in Belgium, only to have Joseph Smith born centuries later in distant Bombay.

The raising up of that constellation of “wise” Founding Fathers to produce America's remarkable Constitution, whose rights and protection belong to “every man,” was not a random thing either (see D&C 101:77–78, 80). One historian called our Founding Fathers “the most remarkable generation of public men in the history of the United States or perhaps of any other nation” (Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Birth of the Nation* [1968], 245). Another historian added, “It would be invaluable if we could know what produced this burst of talent from a base of only two and a half million inhabitants” (Barbara W. Tuchman, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* [1984], 18).

Yet some still settle for an inconsistent or incapable god. Laman and Lemuel, for instance, were aware of ancient Israel's miraculous rescue from Pharaoh's mighty armies, but they murmured and were intimidated by a mere local Laban. We can be so provincial and so self-concerned. God, who oversees the interlacings of galaxies, stars, and worlds, asks us to confess His hand in our personal lives too (see D&C 59:21). Have we not been reassured about the fall of one sparrow and that the very hairs of our heads are numbered? (see Matthew 10:29–30; D&C 84:80). God is in the details! Just as the Lord knows all of His vast creations, He also knows and loves each in any crowd—indeed, He knows and loves each and all of mankind! (see 1 Nephi 11:17).

Consider His tender salutations to Moses—“I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight” (Exodus 33:12)—and to Joseph: “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

Be fully persuaded of God's capacity

No wonder King Benjamin pleads with us to believe that we do not comprehend all that God comprehends (see Mosiah 4:9). Ignoring the revelations about God's astounding capacity is like playing aimlessly and contentedly with wooden blocks featuring the letters of the alphabet, without realizing that Shakespearean sonnets were created using that same alphabet.

Father Abraham "staggered not" at the divine promise of posterity, because he was "fully persuaded that, what [God] had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20–21). May we be "fully persuaded."

These words of Anselm are thus such good counsel: "Believe in order to understand," rather than "understand [in order to] believe" (*St. Anselm*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane [1903], 7).

Despite troubles, we can have peace

Brothers and sisters, though living in a time of commotion, we can stand in holy places and not be moved (see D&C 45:32; 87:8). Though living in a time of violence, we can have that inner peace that passeth understanding (see Philippians 4:7). Perplexing things will still happen, but, like Nephi, we can still know that God loves us, a felicitous and fundamental fact which can and will sustain us through so much! (see 1 Nephi 11:17).

How can we know that God is aware of us and loves us? He tells us by the scriptures—likewise, by our honestly counting the blessings and bestowals of His grace in our lives. Most of all, He tells us by the still, small voice of the Spirit! (see Alma 34:38; D&C 78:17–19).

Soaring revelations and the mighty change

The "mighty change" required by discipleship may seem roller-coaster-like, as soaring revelations bring the gravity of humbling perspective. It was so with

Moses, who "fell unto the earth" and exclaimed, "Man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed" (Moses 1:9–10). Then came, however, the divine, reassuring disclosure:

"For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

"Mighty" changing, however, is mighty hard work, a labor made more difficult by heeding the unflattering urges of the natural man. Too often our possibilities have been muted by the mundane. We are scarcely ready for the vaulting revelations. Imagine—a spirit portion of each of us is actually eternal, and we were with God in the beginning! (see D&C 93:29, 33).

Encircled in the arms of His love

Of course we cannot fully comprehend all this *right now*! Of course we cannot know the meaning of all things *right now*. But we can know, *right now*, that God knows us and loves us individually!

But, brothers and sisters, what keeps us from knowing and loving Him more? Our reluctance to give away all our sins, thinking instead that a down payment will do. Likewise, our reluctance to let our wills be swallowed up in His will, thinking instead that merely acknowledging His will is sufficient! (see Mosiah 15:7).

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that God, "before [the earth] rolled into existence, . . . contemplated the whole of the events connected with the earth. . . . [God] knew . . . the depth of iniquity that would be connected with the human family, their weakness and strength, . . . the situation of all nations and . . . their destiny, . . . and [He] has made ample provision [for mankind's] redemption" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 220).

Part of God's "ample provision" consists of imperfect people like you and me, committed to shining and serving in our appointed orbits, knowing all the while

that we are encircled "in the arms of [His] love" (D&C 6:20).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today."

President Monson

Brothers and sisters, there surely is sunshine in our souls today. As you leave the conference, we ask you to obey traffic

rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to this wonderful Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they provided this morning.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Faust's remarks, the choir will sing "I Believe in Christ" and the benediction will be offered by Elder Richard D. Allred of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President James E. Faust

What's in it for me?

I humbly pray that the same spirit which has attended the other speakers this morning will continue as I address you.

Many years ago I was in a professional association with two older, more experienced men. We had been friends for many years and found it mutually beneficial to help one another. One day, one associate sought our help on a complex matter. As soon as the issue had been explained, the first thing the other associate said was, "What's in it for me?" When his old friend responded so selfishly, I saw the look of pain and disappointment on the face of the one who had invited our help. The relationship between the two was never quite the same after that. Our self-serving friend did not prosper, as his selfishness soon eclipsed his considerable gifts, talents, and qualities. Unfortunately, one of the curses of the world today is encapsulated in this selfish response: "What's in it for me?"

During my professional career I helped the heirs of a noble couple settle their estate. The estate was not large, but it was the fruit of many years of hard work and sacrifice. Their children were all decent, God-fearing people who had been

taught to live the saving principles of the Savior. But when it came to dividing up the property, a dispute developed about who should get what. Even though there was nothing of great value to fight about, feelings of selfishness and greed caused a rift among some of the family members that never healed and continued into the next generation. How tragic that the legacy offered by these wonderful parents turned out to be so destructive of family unity and love among their children. I learned from this that selfishness and greed bring bitterness and contention; on the other hand, sacrifice and giving bring peace and contentment.

Satan is the father of selfishness

In the Grand Council in Heaven, when the great plan of salvation for God's children was presented, Jesus responded, "Here am I, send me,"¹ and "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever."² And thus He became our Savior. In contrast, Satan, who had been highly regarded as "a son of the morning,"³ countered that he would come and "redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost."⁴ Satan had two conditions: the first was the denial of agency, and the second, that he

would have the honor. In other words, something had to be in it for him. And thus he became the father of lies and selfishness.

Learn to overcome selfishness

Taking up one's cross and following the Savior means overcoming selfishness; it is a commitment to serve others. Selfishness is one of the baser human traits, which must be subdued and overcome. We torture our souls when we focus on getting rather than giving. Often the first word that many little children learn to say is *mine*. They have to be taught the joy of sharing. Surely one of the great schoolmasters for overcoming selfishness is parenthood. Mothers go into the valley of the shadow of death to bring forth children. Parents work hard and give up so much to shelter, feed, clothe, protect, and educate their children.

I have learned that selfishness has more to do with how we feel about our possessions than how much we have. The poet Wordsworth said, "The world is too much with us; late and soon, / Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers."⁵ A poor man can be selfish⁶ and a rich man generous, but a person obsessed only with getting will have a hard time finding peace in this life.

Elder William R. Bradford once said: "Of all influences that cause men to choose wrong, selfishness is undoubtedly the strongest. Where there is selfishness, the Spirit of the Lord is absent. Talents go unshared, the needs of the poor unfilled, the weak unstrengthened, the ignorant untaught, and the lost unrecovered."⁷

We are custodians of the Lord's gifts

I recently spoke with one of the most generous people I have ever known. I asked him to describe the feelings of fulfillment that have come because of his generosity. He spoke about the feeling of

joy and happiness in one's heart from sharing with others less fortunate. He stated that nothing is really his—that it all comes from the Lord and we are only the custodians of what He has given us. As the Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "All these things are mine, and ye are my stewards."⁸

Sometimes it is easy for us to forget that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."⁹ The Savior warned us, as recorded in the book of Luke:

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

"And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

"And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."¹⁰

"Vell, den, I vill not go"

Some years ago, Elder ElRay L. Christiansen told about one of his distant Scandinavian relatives who joined the Church. He was quite well-to-do and sold his lands and stock in Denmark to come to Utah with his family. For a while he did well as far as the Church and its activities were concerned, and he prospered financially. However, he became so caught up in his possessions that he forgot about his purpose in coming to America. The bishop

visited him and implored him to become active as he used to be. The years passed, and some of his brethren visited him and said, "Now, Lars, the Lord was good to you when you were in Denmark. He has been good to you since you have come here. . . . We think now, since you are growing a little older, that it would be well for you to spend some of your time in the interests of the Church. After all, you can't take these things with you when you go."

Jolted by this remark, the man replied, "Vell, den, I vill not go."¹⁰ But he did! And so will all of us!

Abraham's example

It is so easy for some to become obsessed with what they possess and to lose eternal perspective. When Abraham went out of Egypt, his nephew Lot went with him to Bethel. Both Abraham and Lot had flocks and herds and tents, "and the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together."¹² After some friction between the herdmen of Abraham and Lot, Abraham made a proposal to Lot:

"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

" . . . If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."¹³

Lot saw "what was in it for him" as he looked over the fruitful plain of Jordan and chose to take the land which was close to the worldly place of Sodom.¹⁴ Abraham was content to take his flocks to live in the more barren land of Canaan, yet he accumulated even more wealth there.

Abraham, however, is remembered more as the grand patriarch of the Lord's covenant people. One of the first references we have of the payment of tithing is when Abraham paid a tithe of all he owned to Melchizedek.¹⁵ Abraham had

the confidence of the Lord, who showed him the intelligences of the premortal world, the choosing of a Redeemer, and the Creation.¹⁶ Abraham is also known for his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. This tremendous act of faith is symbolic of the ultimate selfless act in all of history, when the Savior gave His life for all of us to atone for our sins.

The Good Samaritan inspires a young boy

Some years ago a young "Korean boy took his weekly allowance and bought newspapers with it. Then he and some friends sold these on the streets of Seoul, Korea, to raise money to help a fellow student who did not have sufficient funds to stay in school. This young man also gave part of his lunch to this boy each day so that he would not go hungry. Why did he do these things? Because he had been studying the story of the Good Samaritan¹⁷ and didn't just want to learn about the Good Samaritan but wanted to know what it felt like to be one by doing what a Good Samaritan would do. . . . Only after careful questioning by his father about his activities"¹⁸ did he admit, "But, Dad, every time I help my friend, I feel I'm becoming more like the Good Samaritan. Besides that, I want to help my classmates who aren't as fortunate as I. It's not that big of a thing I am doing. I read about it in my seminary manual and felt it was the thing I ought to do."¹⁹ The boy did not ask, "What's in it for me?" before performing this kindness. In fact, he did it without any thought of recompense or recognition.

An unselfish man saves thousands

On September 11, 2001, the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City were hit by terrorist-controlled airliners that caused both towers to collapse. Thousands of people were killed. Out of this tragedy have come hundreds of stories of courageous, unselfish acts. One

very poignant and heroic account is the *Washington Post's* story of retired army colonel Cyril "Rick" Rescorla, who was working as vice president for corporate security of Morgan Stanley Dean Witter.

Rick was a very experienced ex-military combat leader. He was in his office when "the first plane struck the north tower at 8:48 a.m. . . . He took a call from the 71st floor reporting the fireball in One World Trade Center, and he immediately ordered an evacuation of all 2,700 employees in Building Two," as well as 1,000 more in Building Five. Using his bullhorn, he moved up the floors, working through a bottleneck on the 44th and going as high as the 72nd, helping to evacuate the people from each floor. One friend who saw Rick reassuring people in the 10th-floor stairwell told him, "Rick, you've got to get out, too."

"As soon as I make sure everyone else is out," he replied.

"He was not rattled at all. He was putting the lives of his colleagues ahead of his own." He called headquarters to say he was going back up to search for stragglers.

His wife had watched the United Airlines jet go through his tower. "After a while, her phone rang. It was Rick.

"I don't want you to cry," he said. "I have to evacuate my people now."

"She kept sobbing.

"If something happens to me, I want you to know that you made my life."

"The phone went dead." Rick did not make it out.

"Morgan Stanley lost only six of its 2,700 employees in the south tower on Sept. 11, an isolated miracle amid the carnage. And company officials say Rescorla deserves most of the credit. He drew up the evacuation plan. He hustled his colleagues to safety. And then he apparently went back into the inferno to search for stragglers. He was the last man out of the south tower after the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, and no one seems to

doubt that he would've been again last month if the skyscraper hadn't collapsed on him first."

Amid the great evil and carnage of September 11, 2001, Rick was not looking for what might be in it for him; instead he was unselfishly thinking about others and the danger they were in. Rick Rescorla was the "right man in the right place at the right time." Rick, "a 62-year-old mountain of a man coolly [sacrificed] his life for others."²⁰ As the Savior Himself said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."²¹

He that loseth his life shall find it

Most of us don't demonstrate our unselfishness in such a dramatic way, but for each of us unselfishness can mean being the right person at the right time in the right place to render service. Almost every day brings opportunities to perform unselfish acts for others. Such acts are unlimited and can be as simple as a kind word, a helping hand, or a gracious smile.

The Savior reminds us, "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."²² One of life's paradoxes is that a person who approaches everything with a what's-in-it-for-me attitude may acquire money, property, and land but in the end will lose the fulfillment and the happiness that a person enjoys who shares his talents and gifts generously with others.

I wish to testify that the greatest fulfilling service to be rendered by any of us is in the service of the Master. In the various pursuits of my life, none has been as rewarding or beneficial as responding to the calls for service in this Church. Each has been different. Each one has brought a separate blessing. The greatest fulfillment in life comes by rendering service to others and not being obsessed with "what's in it for me." Of this I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Abraham 3:27.
2. Moses 4:2.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 76:26.
4. Moses 4:1.
5. William Wordsworth, "The World Is Too Much with Us; Late and Soon," lines 1-2.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 56:17.
7. "Selfishness vs. Selflessness," *Ensign*, Apr. 1983, 51.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 104:86.
9. Psalm 24:1.
10. Luke 12:15-21.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 35; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 35.
12. Genesis 13:6.
13. Genesis 13:8-9.

14. See Genesis 13:10-11.
15. See Alma 13:15.
16. See Abraham 3-4.
17. See Luke 10:25-37.
18. Victor L. Brown, in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 51-52; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 40.
19. "Profiting for Others," *New Era*, June 1979, 50.
20. Michael Grunwald, "A Tower of Courage," *Washington Post*, 28 Oct. 2001.
21. John 15:13.
22. Matthew 10:39.

The choir sang "I Believe in Christ."
Elder Richard D. Allred offered the
benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 5, 2002, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a family choir from stakes in the Salt Lake Hunter Area. The choir was directed by Jared L. Dunn, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the

Internet and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a family choir from stakes in the Salt Lake Hunter Area, under the direction of Jared L. Dunn, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Glorious Things Are Sung of Zion." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Glorious Things Are Sung of Zion."

Elder Charles Didier offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "Come Along, Come Along," following which President Thomas S. Monson will present the Gen-

eral Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote.

The choir sang "Come Along, Come Along."

The Sustaining of Church Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor may manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elder Ben B. Banks as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate him as an emeritus

General Authority. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it. Thank you.

With gratitude for their service as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorím, L. Edward Brown, Earl M. Monson, and Jerald L. Taylor and to the following as Area Authority Seventies: Paulo C. Amorím, Carl W. Bacon, Bruce B. Bingham, O. Brent Black, Antonio Cappi, Victor D. Cave, Craig C. Christensen, James M. Dunn, David W. Ferrel, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, Mario E. Guzmán, Spencer V. Jones, Hitoshi Kashikura, Chong-Youl Kim, Richard K. Klein, John Maxwell, Wolfgang H. Paul, Keith L. Smith, Juan Uceda, Claudio D. Zivic. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand. They have served well.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elder Richard J. Maynes as second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. It is proposed that we sustain Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Craig C. Christensen, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, and Spencer V. Jones as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Val R. Christensen as second counselor in

the Sunday School general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of sincere appreciation Sisters Margaret D. Nadauld, Carol B. Thomas, and Sharon G. Larsen as the Young Women general presidency. We also release all members of the Young Women general board. All in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Sister Susan Winder Tanner as the new general president of the Young Women, with Sister Julie Bangerter Beck as first counselor and Sister Elaine Schwartz Dalton as second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

President Hinckley, it appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers. Thanks to all those who have been released for their unstinting service and commitment to their Heavenly Father, and welcome to those who have been newly called. We shall now ask the newly called members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy and the Young Women general presidency to take their places on the stand. Thank you.

President Faust

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which Elder Robert D. Hales, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy will address us.

They will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" At the conclusion of the singing, we will hear from Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy, followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder David B. Haight

An honor to stand and bear witness

When President Thomas S. Monson asked those new members of the Seventy and the Young Women general presidency to come up and take their places on the stand, I remembered vividly April 1970, when I was called to be an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve—which was a surprise to me. I'd only known about it for just a few hours. As I was invited to sit in one of the red chairs in the old Tabernacle, the choir started to sing "O Divine Redeemer." As I listened to that pleading song with that wonderful melody, I silently asked the Savior to accept me as I am and remember not my failures, my shortcomings, and my sins (see Psalm

25:7). What a wonderful day that was! That flashed through my mind as President Monson made that invitation today.

I'm honored to be here this afternoon to spend a few moments with all of you and bear to you my witness and my testimony and my feelings regarding this wonderful work.

I told Elder Neal A. Maxwell I would come up here without my cane. He had it ready for me, but I said, "No, I can get by without it. I'll show you I have the faith that it will happen." As I get older and as the years roll on, I'm honored to have this opportunity and to have the ability and the desire to stand and witness to you of the blessings of the gospel that have come into my life during these past many years.

I don't know if I'm the oldest one in this great hall today, but I am now in my 97th year. When it was announced this morning that this is the 172nd semiannual conference of the Church, I thought some people in their younger years could look upon 172 as a long, long time. I would remind you of the 100th anniversary of the Church. At that time, Ruby and I were married. It was 1930. This is the 172nd anniversary of the Church, and we have been married 72 years. I'm only mentioning that to you so you mathematicians can remember 172; it comes pretty easily.

Gratitude for blessings

I wish at this time to pay tribute and express gratitude to my Heavenly Father for the blessings I've received all the years of my life—for having been born of goodly parents and raised in a goodly home. And as we have moved around the country in all of the activities we have been involved in, I'm grateful to have been associated with good people. Good people influence your life and help in molding your own personality and character and help you to mingle out in society and live the way that you should live. They help you carry on worthwhile enterprises, and they lift you onto a higher plane. And so I'm grateful to my Heavenly Father for the blessings I have had. I bear witness of Him—that I know that He is our Father and that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Creator, and the Savior of all of mankind. I am grateful for the majestic role He has played in the Creation and in establishing the gospel on the earth and for the opportunity that brings to mankind, if they will listen, to hear and to understand and to have the blessings of heaven if they merit them and to live in such a way that the gospel becomes a great part of their life.

I have gratitude for my ancestors who joined the Church back in the early days of the Church, who moved from upstate

New York to join with the Saints in Nauvoo and became involved with the Nauvoo Temple and then with the exodus into the West. For all of these blessings, I'm grateful on this day, as I pronounce them to you.

Inspired leadership of President Hinckley

I must mention President Gordon B. Hinckley. He gave an outstanding talk this morning—giving us an overview of the recent years but particularly an overview of the events of Nauvoo and of the rebuilding of that majestic temple. All that has taken place there has been a blessing to the world and to mankind.

I want President Hinckley to know that I have watched carefully since he was called to be an additional counselor to President Spencer W. Kimball and as he has assumed his role in the First Presidency. How he has grown and matured and been inspired and directed in carrying out the activities that we have been a witness to! Many of us have played some small role in the vision that he had of the growth that has happened in the Church recently, including the building of the temples, where we now have 114 operating. All of these things have been the result of the inspired direction of President Hinckley. Bless his heart for what he has done in helping the Church to expand and our image to grow and improve throughout the world. We're so grateful for what he has done, for the stature that we have today in the Church, and for his leadership.

Gratitude of a healed leper

As recorded in Luke, one day the Savior entered a village where there were ten lepers. Those of us who have grown up in the last few years know very little about lepers. Leprosy was a terrible, dreaded disease anciently. These ten lepers came to the Savior and said, "Master, have mercy

upon us; have mercy upon us who have that terrible ailment of leprosy." And the Savior said to the ten lepers, "Go visit your priest, and he will take care of you," which they did. They went to see their priests, and they were cleansed, all ten of them. A short time later one of them returned to the Savior and fell on his face and his hands and his knees, thanking the Savior for blessing him and making him well from that terrible disease. And the Savior said to that one man: "Weren't there ten? What has happened to the other nine? Where are they?" (See Luke 17:11–19.)

As I've read that story again and again, it's made a great impression upon me. How would you like to be part of the "nine society"? Wouldn't that be something—to be numbered among those who failed to return and acknowledge the Savior for the blessings He had given them? Only one returned.

Don't take blessings for granted

It's so easy for us to receive blessings in life, many of them almost uncounted, and have things happen in our lives that can help change our lives, improve our lives, and bring the Spirit into our lives. But we sometimes take them for granted. How grateful we should be for the blessings that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings into our hearts and souls. I would remind all of you that if we're ever going to show gratitude properly to our Heavenly Father, we should do it with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength—because it was He who gave us life and breath. He gave us the opportunity to live as we are, to have the gospel in our lives, to have the example of good people like President Hinckley leading the Church throughout the world today and the opportunity for the young people to look to him with pride

and gratitude for a leader who looks and acts the part and demonstrates what the Spirit of Christ can bring into our heart and soul. As that gratitude is magnified and developed and expanded, it can bless our hearts and our minds and our souls to where we'd like to continue to carry on and do those things that we are asked to do.

Family raises hands to sustain leaders

We have a lot of our family scattered in at least 20 locations in the United States and England. I have suggested to them that when they have opportunities to sustain the General Authorities—particularly President Hinckley and his counselors—if they have to stand at the radio or wherever it might be, that with enthusiasm they raise their hands and say to themselves, "I'm part of sustaining the leadership of the Church." I had in my mind's eye today as we were raising our hands some little youngsters—children whom we love and adore—raising their hands in various parts of the world. We hope that we will implant in them along with the Spirit of the Lord a desire to learn, to know, to live and be part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We hope they fully enjoy their opportunities to develop their characters and to be able to reach out and help change and lift the hearts of other people.

God lives. He is our Father. I testify to you that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and the Prophet Joseph Smith was the prophet of the Restoration. President Hinckley is our inspired leader over this Church throughout the world today. Bless his heart for all that he does and for the inspiration and revelation and vision that is his as he leads the work forward. I leave this witness with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Tithing helps qualify us for the temple

Tithing is a test of faith with eternal blessings.¹ In the Old Testament, Abraham proved his faith by paying tithes to the great high priest Melchizedek.² Abraham's grandson Jacob vowed to the Lord, "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."³

Tithing has been established in these latter days as an essential law for members of the Lord's restored Church. It is one of the basic ways we witness our faith in Him and our obedience to His laws and commandments. Tithing is one of the commandments that qualifies us, by our faith, to enter the temple—the house of the Lord.

Just over three months after the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith, when the Saints were building the Nauvoo Temple, Brigham Young wrote on behalf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

"Enter steadily and regularly upon a strict observance of the law of tithing, . . . then come up to the House of the Lord, and be taught in his ways, and walk in his paths."⁴

The strict observance of the law of tithing not only qualifies us to receive the higher, saving ordinances of the temple, it allows us to receive them on behalf of our ancestors. When asked whether members of the Church could be baptized for the dead if they had not paid their tithing, President John Taylor, then of the Quorum of the Twelve, answered:

"A man who has not paid his tithing is unfit to be baptized for his dead. . . . If a man has not faith enough to attend to these little things, he has not faith enough to save himself and his friends."⁵

Tithing fortifies our faith

Tithing develops and tests our faith. By sacrificing to the Lord what we may

think we need or want for ourselves, we learn to rely on Him. Our faith in Him makes it possible to keep our temple covenants and receive eternal temple blessings. Pioneer Sarah Rich, wife of Charles C. Rich, wrote in her journal after leaving Nauvoo:

"Many were the blessings we had received in the House of the Lord, which [have] caused joy and comfort in the midst of all our sorrows, and enabled us to have faith in God, knowing He would guide us and sustain us in the unknown journey that lay before us."⁶

As was true for the pioneers, the obedient payment of tithing fortifies our faith, and that faith sustains us through the trials, tribulations, and sorrows in our life's journey.

Tithing also teaches us to control our desires and passions for the things of this world. Payment of tithing encourages us to be honest in our dealings with our fellowmen. We learn to trust that what we have been given, through the blessings of the Lord and our own diligent efforts, is sufficient for our needs.

A preparatory law

Tithing has a special purpose as a preparatory law. Early in this dispensation, the Lord commanded certain members of the Church to live the higher law of consecration—a law received by covenant. When this covenant was not kept, great tribulations came upon the Saints.⁷ The law of consecration was then withdrawn. In its place the Lord revealed the law of tithing for the whole Church.⁸ On July 8, 1838, He declared:

"And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people.

" . . . Those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever."⁹

The law of tithing prepares us to live the higher law of consecration—to dedicate and give all our time, talents, and resources to the work of the Lord. Until the day when we are required to live this higher law, we are commanded to live the law of the tithe, which is to freely¹⁰ give one-tenth of our income annually.

Tithing yields spiritual, temporal blessings

To those who faithfully and honestly live the law of tithing, the Lord promises an abundance of blessings. Some of these blessings are temporal, just as tithes are temporal. But like the outward physical ordinances of baptism and the sacrament, the commandment to pay tithing requires temporal sacrifice, which ultimately yields great spiritual blessings.

I know of a couple who lived thousands of miles from the nearest temple. Although they earned little, they faithfully paid their tithing and saved all that they could to journey to the house of the Lord. After a year, the husband's brother—not a member of the Church—unexpectedly came forward and offered them two airplane tickets. This temporal blessing made possible the spiritual blessings of their temple endowments and sealing. An additional spiritual blessing came later as the brother, touched by the couple's humble faithfulness, joined the Church.

The temporal and spiritual blessings of tithing are specifically tailored to us and our families, according to the Lord's will. But to receive them, we must obey the law upon which they are predicated.¹¹ In the case of tithing, the Lord has said:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."¹²

Would any of us intentionally reject an outpouring of blessings from the Lord?

Sadly, this is what we do when we fail to pay tithing. We say no to the very blessings we are seeking and praying to receive. If you are one who has doubted the blessings of tithing, I encourage you to accept the Lord's invitation to "prove [Him] now herewith." Pay your tithing. Unlock the windows of heaven. You will be abundantly blessed for your obedience and faithfulness to the Lord's laws and commandments.

A truly equitable law

Be assured that these blessings are poured out equally on rich and poor alike. As the hymn says, it is "sacrifice [that] brings forth the blessings of heaven," not the sum of our contributions.¹³ Members who freely give a full 10 percent of their annual income receive all of the promised blessings of tithing, whether the amount is a widow's mite or a king's ransom.

Some years ago I visited a meetinghouse of another denomination. Etched in the beautiful stained-glass windows which had been brought from Europe was the name of their donor; carved into the majestic pulpit made from the cedars of Lebanon were the initials of a wealthy benefactor; the most desirable pews were named after prominent families who had donated the most to the chapel building fund.

By contrast, in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all who pay a full tithe are equally acknowledged and blessed by the Lord, without special public honors and rewards. He is "no respecter of persons."¹⁴ His law of revenue is truly an equitable one.

The Lord oversees the use of tithing funds

Significant in our day is the way in which tithing is distributed. As we see examples of greed and avarice among some irresponsible corporate executives, we can be grateful that the Lord has provided a

way for tithing to be administered under His direction.

According to revelation, bishops are ordained to "keep the Lord's storehouse; to receive the funds of the church."¹⁵ Both bishops and clerks are expected to be full-tithe payers who have learned to live prudently within their means. Within hours of receiving tithing funds from members of their wards and branches, these local leaders transmit the funds directly to the headquarters of the Church.

Then, as revealed by the Lord, the use of tithing is determined by a council comprised of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric. The Lord specifically states that the council's work be directed "by mine own voice unto them."¹⁶ This council is called the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes.

It is remarkable to witness this council heed the Lord's voice. Each member is aware of and participates in all the council's decisions. No decision is made until the council is unanimous. All tithing funds are spent for the purposes of the Church, including welfare (care for the poor and needy), temples, building and upkeep of meetinghouses, education, curriculum—in short, the work of the Lord.

When a friend of President George Albert Smith asked him what he thought of his friend's personal plan to take what would have been tithing and donate his tenth in charitable donations of his own choice, President Smith's counsel was:

"I think you are a very generous man with someone else's property. . . . You have told me what you have done with the Lord's money but you have not told me that you have given anyone a penny of your own. He is the best partner you have in the world. He gives you everything you have, even the air you breathe. He has said you should take one-tenth of what comes to you and give it to the Church as directed by the Lord. You haven't done that;

you have taken your best partner's money, and have given it away."¹⁷

The tithing of the members of the Church belongs to the Lord. He decides, through a council of His servants, how it should be used.

To Church members and to others throughout the world, I bear my testimony of the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes. I have sat on this council for 17 years, as the Presiding Bishop of the Church and now as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Without exception, the tithing funds of this Church have been used for His purposes.

Teach children the law of tithing

The Lord desires that all His children have the blessings of tithing. Too often we as parents do not teach and encourage our children to live this law because their contribution only amounts to a few cents. But without a testimony of tithing, they are vulnerable. In their teenage years they become attracted to clothes, entertainment, and expensive possessions and risk losing the special protection that tithing provides.

As the years go on, is it possible that a young man can be ordained an elder, serve a mission, and effectively teach a law to others that he has not lived himself? When he returns home and faces the pressures of schooling, starting a family, and a career, will the law of tithing become easier to live? Likewise, will a young woman be worthy to serve the Lord and make celestial marriage covenants without having gained a testimony of tithing for herself? Will she be prepared to teach her children a law she has not learned by her own experience? Oh, what faithfulness is required of fathers and mothers who would unitedly call down the protective blessings of tithing upon their family and the blessings that are rightfully theirs! Said President Lorenzo Snow:

"Teach the children to pay tithing, so that it may be perpetually observed. If we observe this law, no matter what our enemies may do, the Lord will preserve us."¹⁸

Tithing settlement is a sacred opportunity

In a few weeks each of us will have the sacred opportunity to sit once again with our bishop and settle our tithing with the Lord. Your bishop will be gentle and kind. He will understand the challenges you face. If you cannot pay back what you missed paying in the past, go forward. Begin today. Share with your bishop your commitment to pay a full tithe in the future, and work out a plan to return to the temple as soon as possible. As soon as you have demonstrated your faith in paying tithing over a period of time and kept the other necessary commandments, you will be able to enjoy the eternal blessings of the temple. I plead with you, do not let this opportunity pass by. Do not procrastinate.

Fathers and mothers, as you prepare for tithing settlement I encourage you to gather your little ones around you and help them count their pennies. Help your young men and young women consult their records and take inventory of their annual increase. What a marvelous opportunity this is to plant the seed of faith in the hearts of your children. You will start them on a path that leads to the temple. The generations of your ancestors before you, and your posterity after you, will rise up and call you blessed, for you will have prepared your children to perform saving ordinances on their behalf. It is no coincidence, my brothers and sisters, that under the direction of God's living prophet on the earth today, President Gordon B. Hinckley, temples are spreading over the earth. Keeping the commandments, which includes paying our tithing, will qualify us to enter those temples, be sealed to our families, and receive eternal blessings.

A poor family needs the law of tithing

I plead that we will not procrastinate and that we will heed our Lord's commandment to live the law of the tithe. I know of two missionaries who visited a very poor family. The family's home was made of pressboard and sticks, with a dirt floor and no electricity or beds. Each evening the father, a farm laborer, spent his entire day's wages on groceries for dinner. Departing from the family's humble home, the senior companion thought to himself, "The law of tithing will surely be a stumbling block to this family. Perhaps we shouldn't bring it up for a while." A few moments later the junior companion, who had grown up in similar circumstances in his own country, voiced his own thoughts aloud: "I know the principle of tithing isn't taught for four more discussions, but can we please teach it the next time we visit? They need to know about tithing now because they need the help and the blessing of the Lord so much."

This missionary understood that "there is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated."¹⁹ The Lord wants to bless this family and anxiously awaits their obedience so He can.

Tithing is a test of our faith

My beloved brothers and sisters, the eternal blessings of tithing are real. I have experienced them in my life and in the life of my family. The test of our faith is whether we will live the law of tithing by our obedience and sacrifice. For, in the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, "a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation."²⁰

I testify that the Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed His life to bring this salvation to each of us. As His special witness, I testify that He lives. And on His behalf, I express gratitude to you, the children, the widows, the youth, the families—the faithful—for your sacred tithes. “These deeds shall thy memorial be; Fear not, thou didst them unto me.”²¹ In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 225–26.
2. See Genesis 14:20.
3. Genesis 28:22.
4. *History of the Church*, 7:282.
5. *History of the Church*, 7:292–93.
6. Journal of Sarah De Armon Pea Rich, Archives, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University (typescript), 42.
7. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, (Melchizedek Priesthood course of study, first series, 1946), 196.
8. See the historical introduction to Doctrine and Covenants 119.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4.
10. See *Church History and Modern Revelation* (third series, 1946), 120.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
12. Malachi 3:10.
13. “Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 1:35; 38:16.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 72:10.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 120:1.
17. *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, sel. Preston Nibley (1948), 46; see also 44–47.
18. Quoted in *Church History and Modern Revelation* (third series), 122.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
20. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 69.
21. “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief,” *Hymns*, no. 29.

Elder Lance B. Wickman

To those who grievingly ask, “Why?”

Some of my richest memories are associated with weekend assignments to stake conferences as I have accompanied a stake president in visits to members of his stake wrestling with life’s challenges in courage and faith, especially those who have lost a child or who are struggling valiantly in nursing a sick or crippled or handicapped child. I know from poignant personal experience that there is no night quite so dark as the loss of a child. Neither is there any day quite so long and exhausting as the relentlessness of caring for a child crippled in form or faculty. All such parents can empathize exquisitely with the father of the child afflicted with a “dumb spirit,” who, when admonished by the Savior to believe, responded in anguish of soul, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (see Mark 9:17, 23–24).

And so today I wish to speak to all who are struggling in this laboratory of applied faith that is called mortality—and in particular to those bereaved, burdened, and grieving parents who beseechingly ask, “Why?”

Grief is a by-product of love

First, please know that grief is the natural by-product of love. One cannot selflessly love another person and not grieve at his suffering or eventual death. The only way to avoid the grief would be to not experience the love; and it is love that gives life its richness and meaning. Hence, what a grieving parent can expect to receive from the Lord in response to earnest supplication may not necessarily be an elimination of grief so much as a sweet reassurance that, whatever his or

her circumstances, one's child is in the tender care of a loving Heavenly Father.

Trust God rather than press to know why

Next, do not ever doubt the goodness of God, even if you do not know "why." The overarching question asked by the bereaved and the burdened is simply this: *Why? Why* did our daughter die, when we prayed so hard that she would live and when she received priesthood blessings? *Why* are we struggling with this misfortune, when others relate miraculous healing experiences for their loved ones? These are natural questions, understandable questions. But they are also questions that usually go begging in mortality. The Lord has said simply, "My ways [are] higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). As the Son's will was "swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7), so must ours be.

Still, we mortals quite naturally want to know the why. Yet, in pressing too earnestly for the answer, we may forget that mortality was designed, in a manner of speaking, as the season of unanswered questions. Mortality has a different, more narrowly defined purpose: It is a proving ground, a probationary state, a time to walk by faith, a time to prepare to meet God (see, for example, Abraham 3:24–25; 2 Nephi 31:15–16, 20; Alma 12:24; 42:4–13). It is in nurturing humility (see Alma 32:6–21) and submissiveness (see Mosiah 3:19) that we may comprehend a fullness of the intended mortal experience and put ourselves in a frame of mind and heart to receive the promptings of the Spirit. Reduced to their essence, humility and submissiveness are an expression of complete willingness to let the "why" questions go unanswered for now, or perhaps even to ask, "Why not?" It is in enduring well to the end that we achieve this life's purposes (see 2 Nephi 31:15–16; Alma 32:15; D&C 121:8). I believe that mortality's supreme

test is to face the "why" and then let it go, trusting humbly in the Lord's promise that "all things must come to pass in their time" (D&C 64:32).

The Lord comforts us

But the Lord has not left us comfortless or without any answers. As to the healing of the sick, He has clearly said, "And again, it shall come to pass that he that hath faith in me to be healed, *and is not appointed unto death*, shall be healed" (D&C 42:48; italics added). All too often we overlook the qualifying phrase "and is not appointed unto death" ("or," we might add, "unto sickness or handicap"). Please do not despair when fervent prayers have been offered and priesthood blessings performed and your loved one makes no improvement or even passes from mortality. Take comfort in the knowledge that you did everything you could. Such faith, fasting, and blessing could not be in vain! That your child did not recover in spite of all that was done in his behalf can and should be the basis for peace and reassurance to all who love him! *The Lord, who inspires the blessings and who hears every earnest prayer, called him home nonetheless.* All the experiences of prayer, fasting, and faith may well have been more for *our* benefit than for his.

"But if not"

How, then, should we approach the throne of grace as we plead earnestly for a loved one and place hands upon her head to give a blessing by priesthood authority? How do we properly exercise our faith? The Prophet Joseph Smith defined that first principle of the gospel as "Faith *in the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Articles of Faith 1:4; italics added). It is that defining phrase—"in the Lord Jesus Christ"—that we sometimes forget. Too often we offer our prayer or perform our administration and then wait nervously to see whether our request

will be granted, as though approval would provide needed evidence of His existence. That is not faith! Faith is, quite simply, a *confidence* in the Lord. In Mormon's words, it is "a *firm mind* in every form of godliness" (Moroni 7:30; italics added). The three Hebrew magistrates expressed trust that the Lord would deliver them from the fiery furnace, "*but if not,*" they said to the king, "*we [still] will not serve thy gods*" (Daniel 3:18; italics added). Significantly, not three but four men were seen in the midst of the flames, and "the form of the fourth [was] like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:25).

So with us. It is common in our secular world to say that "seeing is believing." Whatever value this little maxim may have in the mundane affairs of life, it is an alien presence when we turn to the Lord in the dark hour of our extremity. The way of the Lord is best defined by a different maxim: "Believing is seeing." Faith in the Lord is the premise, not the conclusion. We *know* He lives; *therefore*, we trust Him to bless us according to His divine will and wisdom. This childlike confidence in the Lord is known in scripture simply as the "sacrifice . . . of a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (D&C 59:8).

The loss of a young son

I offer this as profound conviction born in the fiery crucible of life's experience. Our second son, Adam, entered our lives when I was far away in the jungles and rice paddies of Vietnam. I still have the joyful telegram announcing his birth. Adam was a blue-eyed, blond-haired little fellow with an impish personality. As he turned five years old, Adam eagerly looked forward to starting school. Then a common childhood illness blanketed our southern California community, and Adam contracted the disease. Aside from concern for his comfort, we were not worried. He even seemed to have a light case. Suddenly one morning he did not arise

from his bed; he was in a deep coma. We rushed him to the hospital, where he was placed in intensive care. A constant cadre of devoted doctors and nurses attended him. His mother and I maintained a ceaseless vigil in the waiting room nearby.

I telephoned our dear stake president—a childhood friend and now a beloved colleague in the Seventy, Elder Douglas L. Callister—and asked him if he would come to the hospital and join me in giving Adam a priesthood blessing. Within minutes he was there. As we entered the small, cramped space where Adam's lifeless little body lay, his bed surrounded by a bewildering maze of monitoring devices and other medical paraphernalia, the kind doctors and nurses reverently stepped back and folded their arms. As the familiar and comforting words of a priesthood blessing were spoken in faith and earnest pleading, I was overcome by a profound sense that Someone else was present. I was overwhelmed by the thought that if I should open my eyes, I would see the Savior standing there! I was not the only one in that room who felt that Spirit. We learned quite by chance some months later that one of the nurses who was present that day was so touched that she sought out the missionaries and was baptized.

But notwithstanding, Adam made no improvement. He lingered between this life and the next for several more days as we pleaded with the Lord to return him to us. Finally, one morning after a fitful night, I walked alone down a deserted hospital corridor. I spoke to the Lord and told Him that we wanted our little boy to return so very much, but nevertheless what we wanted most was for His will to be done and that we—Pat and I—would accept that. Adam crossed the threshold into the eternities a short time later.

God's grace is sufficient in our trials

Frankly, we still grieve for our little boy, although the tender ministering of

the Spirit and the passage of the years have softened our sadness. His small picture graces the mantel of our living room beside a more current family portrait of children and grandchildren. But Pat and I know that his path through mortality was intended by a kind Heavenly Father to be shorter and easier than ours and that he has now hurried on ahead to be a welcoming presence when we likewise eventually cross that same fateful threshold.

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o'erflow,
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless, . . .
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,

My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply.

The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design . . .

Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine. . . .

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose

I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, . . .

I'll never, no never, no never forsake!
["How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach

Our covenant to sacrifice

The words "sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven," from the hymn "Praise to the Man,"¹ always stir my soul. Sacrifice is defined as "the act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else more important or worthy."² Sacrifice comes in many forms and may not always be convenient. Latter-day Saints make a covenant with the Lord to sacrifice. By doing so, we surrender our will to His, dedicating our lives to building up His kingdom and serving His children.

Sacrifice of paying an honest tithe

For those who faithfully sacrifice through an honest tithe, the Lord has promised that He will open the windows of heaven.³ Not only does such sacrifice bless the individual and the family, but those voluntary contributions to the Church

provide the energizing resources that help the kingdom of the Lord to perform miracles every day. King Benjamin said: "Consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual."⁴ The faithful contribution of tithes is an outward expression of an inner commitment to sacrifice.

Sacrifice of obeying the law of the fast

Obeying the law of the fast is another form of sacrifice. The Lord asks us to set aside one Sunday a month to fast for two meals. We are invited to contribute the money saved on the cost of those two meals to the Church so it can assist those in need. Fasting and contributing a generous offering have a refining effect upon the soul. President Spencer W. Kimball

stated, "Upon practicing the law of the fast, one finds a personal well-spring of power to overcome self-indulgence and selfishness."⁵

Sacrifices in temple, family history work

Temple and family history work is a sacrifice of love. Faithful Saints contribute millions of hours compiling family history. They research microfilms and records, and with pens and computers they record dates and events. In the temple they perform sacred ordinances for their precious ancestry. Like the Savior, this is an expression of sacrifice—doing something for others which they cannot do for themselves.

A few years ago, while on a Church assignment in St. Petersburg, Russia, my wife, Mary-Jayne, and I had the unique opportunity to feel the blessings of family history work. We visited the vital statistics archive to view the Church's efforts to microfilm some of the records of western Russia. As I watched the archivist photographing pages of moldy old books from the city of Pskov, the names became real people. They seemed to leap right off the page and say, "You have found me. I am no longer lost. I know that someday, somewhere, someone in my family will take my name to the temple, and I will be baptized and endowed, and my wife and children will be sealed to me. Thank you!"

Joseph Smith's example of sacrifice

Joseph Smith's life was an example of unselfish sacrifice for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Though the Prophet Joseph suffered greatly, he remained optimistic and overcame many persecutions. Parley P. Pratt tells of a heartrending experience of being imprisoned with the Prophet in Missouri in the winter of 1838–39. Those six months of suffering and confinement tutored this foreordained, preeminent Prophet.

While the Prophet and his brethren were being held in a cold, unfinished court-

house in Richmond, Missouri, they had listened to the boasting and the despicable abuses the guards had committed among the "Mormons." Finally the Prophet could abide their sordid cursing no longer. Suddenly he stood and in "a voice of thunder" said:

"*'SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still. . . .'*

"... He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained, and without a weapon; calm, unruffled and dignified as an angel." The quaking guards shrank into a corner, dropped their weapons, "begged his pardon, and remained quiet till a change of guards."

Brother Pratt writes further: "I have seen the ministers of justice, clothed in magisterial robes . . . ; I have witnessed a Congress in solemn session . . . ; I have tried to conceive of kings, of royal courts, of thrones and crowns . . . ; but dignity and majesty have I seen but *once*, as it stood in chains, at midnight, in a dungeon in an obscure village of Missouri."⁶

Some weeks after that event, in another dark hour, Joseph implored the Lord for guidance. The Lord answered, "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment."⁷ Then the Lord said these intriguing words to the Prophet: "The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name."⁸

Five years later, looking back on the incomplete construction of the Nauvoo Temple, Joseph knew his journey's end was near and that he was going "like a lamb to the slaughter," yet he was "calm as a summer's morning."⁹ With assurances for his protection, he submitted to one more arrest. However, his trust was dishonored. On June 27, 1844, he and his brother Hyrum were savagely murdered in Carthage Jail.

The ends of the earth have inquired after the name of Joseph Smith, and today the sun never sets on the worldwide membership of the restored Church of Jesus

Christ. These words about the martyred Abraham Lincoln also describe the majesty of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

Here was a man to hold against the world,
A man to match the mountains and the sea. . . .
And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down
As when a lordly cedar, green with boughs,
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky.¹⁰

The Savior's atoning sacrifice

There can be no sacrifice greater than the atoning sacrifice of the Savior Jesus Christ. His Atonement, though incomprehensible and without equal, was this world's crowning event. Gratefully, because of His supreme offer of charity, there is no sting of death, and the grave has no victory.

Our challenge is to unselfishly sacrifice all that we have been given, including our will. Elder Neal A. Maxwell rightly said:

"The submission of one's will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God's altar. The many other things we 'give' . . . are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us."¹¹

Sacrifice is ultimately a matter of the heart—the heart. "Behold, the Lord requir-eth the heart and a willing mind."¹² If we are caring, if we are charitable, if we are obedient to God and follow His prophets, our sacrifices will bring forth the blessings of heaven. "And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit."¹³

In an unusual way, I experienced a glimpse of our Savior's sacrifice of love for me. While in Jerusalem on Christmas Eve, my wife and I visited several of the sites where the Savior walked and taught. The agony suffered by the Savior brought deep

sorrow to us as we stood in the dungeon below the palace of Caiaphas. It was there that our Lord was flogged and scourged. We saw the chain holes in the wall. With tears we sang "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."¹⁴ He was so alone amongst vile perpetrators. With heavy hearts we prayed for courage to be His worthy servants.

Shortly thereafter, we visited the empty Garden Tomb. The words from the scriptures "He is not here: for he is risen"¹⁵ resounded through our hearts. Eliza R. Snow penned:

Although in agony he hung,
No murm'ring word escaped his tongue.
His high commission to fulfill, . . .
He magnified his Father's will.

He dies a sacrifice for sin, . . .
That man may live and glory win.¹⁶

The Savior's Atonement was the greatest act of charity known to mankind.

We sing these words from President Gordon B. Hinckley:

He lives, my one sure rock of faith,
The one bright hope of men on earth,
The beacon to a better way,
The light beyond the veil of death.¹⁷

I sorrow that a single drop of His blood was shed for me. I pray that someday I will meet the Savior. I will kneel and kiss the wounded hands and feet, and He will wipe away my tears. I pray that He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."¹⁸ Because of His mercy, we have hope, brothers and sisters. He is the "Fount of every blessing."¹⁹ Of this I testify in the name of the greatest example of sacrifice, even Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Hymns*, no. 27.
2. *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* (1991), "sacrifice," 1272–73.
3. See Malachi 3:10.
4. Mosiah 2:41.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 121; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 80.

6. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (1985), 180.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 122:1.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 135:4.
10. Edwin Markham, "Lincoln, the Man of the People," in *A Treasury of Great Poems*, comp. Louis Untermeyer (1955), 994-95.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 24.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
13. 3 Nephi 9:20.
14. *Hymns*, no. 29.
15. Matthew 28:6.
16. "Behold the Great Redeemer Die," *Hymns*, no. 191.
17. "My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 135.
18. Matthew 25:21.
19. "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," *Hymns* (1948), no. 70.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Service of the Twelve abroad

Buenas tardes, hermanos y hermanas. I bring you greetings from the wonderful members and missionaries in Latin America. As many of you know, Elder and Sister Dallin Oaks and Elder and Sister Holland have been called to serve in the Philippines and Chile Areas of the Church, respectively. If the buzz of conversation is any indication, this has proven to be of more interest to the Church than one might have supposed. Whatever your speculation, I think I am authorized to assure you that we are not going to these distant outposts as two of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. For those looking for a "sign" in all this, please take it as a sign of a wonderful, growing, international Church, with members and missionaries spreading steadily across languages and continents. It is a joy to meet and serve with Latter-day Saints anywhere, near or far, at home or abroad, and we thank you for your prayers and your interest in the work.

Such service by the Twelve is, of course, not new, and I must say our generation has less challenge in going out than did our predecessors. Best of all, I have Sister Holland at my side, rather than leaving her at home to fend for herself and our children. Furthermore, I did

not have to do manual labor along the way in order to earn the fare to Santiago. We flew to our destination for a few hours in a modern jet airliner rather than sailing for weeks, even months, in the steerage of a ship. I did not leave suffering with chills and fever, cholera, or consumption, although I did have a cold and one leg of our flight was delayed an hour. I have hoped these hardships would qualify me to one day face Peter and Paul, Brigham and Wilford.

Sacrifices of early Church members

As did many of you, I grew up on the stories of the early brethren going to Canada, England, Scandinavia, continental Europe, the Pacific Islands, Mexico, Asia, and so on. More recently I have read of Parley P. Pratt's brief mission to Chile, where the Pratts lost and buried their infant son at Valparaíso. I have read of Elder Melvin J. Ballard, who was called to dedicate South America when that marvelous continent was still one new and rather overwhelming mission field. The service which builds a young, growing Church is not casually requested or whimsically given. On occasion the obstacles have been great and the price sometimes very dear.

And we speak not only of those early brethren who went out to serve, but the women who supported them—and in addition supported themselves and their children, staying at home to raise and protect families, that other portion of the Lord's vineyard about which He is so emphatic.

On the day of her husband's second departure to England, Vilate Kimball was so weak, trembling so severely with ague, that she could do nothing more than weakly shake hands with her husband when he came in tears to say good-bye. Their little David was less than four weeks old then, and only one child, four-year-old Heber Parley, was well enough to carry water for the ailing family. In the hours after her husband's leaving, Vilate lost all strength and had to be assisted back to the confinement of her bed.

Mary Ann Young and her children were equally ill when Brigham left on the same mission, and their financial situation was equally precarious. One heartrending description describes her crossing the Mississippi River in the bitter of winter, thinly clad and shivering with cold, clutching her infant daughter as she went, going to the tithing office in Nauvoo to ask for a few potatoes. Then, still suffering with fever, she made her way with the baby back across the forbidding river, never to write a word to her husband about such difficulties.¹

True faith is always linked to sacrifice

We seldom face anything like those circumstances today, though many missionaries and members still sacrifice greatly to do the work of the Lord. As blessings come and the Church matures, we all hope that service will never be so difficult as these early members found it, but as missionaries are singing this day from Oslo to Osorno and from Seattle to Cebu, we are "called to serve."² To raise our families and serve faithfully in the Church, all without running faster than we have strength,³

require wisdom, judgment, divine help—and inevitably some sacrifice. From Adam to the present hour, true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has always been linked to the offering of sacrifice, our small gift to be a symbolic echo of His majestic offering.⁴ With his eye firmly on the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that a religion that does not include covenants of sacrifice cannot have the power to bring the promise of eternal life.⁵

The sacrifice of a bishop and his wife

May I share just one contemporary example of both the challenge and the blessings that our "calls to serve" can bring. A wonderful sister recently said to a dear friend:

"I want to tell you about the moment I ceased resenting my husband's time and sacrifice as a bishop. It had seemed uncanny how an 'emergency' would arise with a ward member just when he and I were about to go out to do something special together.

A ruined date

"One day I poured out my frustration, and my husband agreed we should guarantee, in addition to Monday nights, one additional night a week just for us. Well, the first 'date night' came, and we were about to get into the car for an evening together when the telephone rang.

" 'This is a test,' I smiled at him. The telephone kept ringing. 'Remember our agreement. Remember our date. Remember me. Let the phone ring.' In the end I wasn't smiling.

"My poor husband looked trapped between me and a ringing telephone. I really did know that his highest loyalty was to me, and I knew he wanted that evening as much as I did. But he seemed paralyzed by the sound of that telephone.

" 'I'd better at least check,' he said with sad eyes. 'It is probably nothing at all.'

"If you do, our date is ruined," I cried. 'I just know it.'

"He squeezed my hand and said, 'Be right back,' and he dashed in to pick up the telephone.

"Well, when my husband didn't return to the car immediately, I knew what was happening. I got out of the car, went into the house, and went to bed. The next morning he spoke a quiet apology, I spoke an even quieter acceptance, and that was the end of it.

A call answered, a tragedy averted

"Or so I thought. I found the event still bothering me several weeks later. I wasn't blaming my husband, but I was disappointed nevertheless. The memory was still fresh when I came upon a woman in the ward I scarcely knew. Very hesitantly, she asked for the opportunity to talk. She then told of becoming infatuated with another man, who seemed to bring excitement into her life of drudgery, she with a husband who worked full-time and carried a full load of classes at the university. Their apartment was confining. She had small children who were often demanding, noisy, and exhausting. She said: 'I was sorely tempted to leave what I saw as my wretched state and just go with this man. My situation was such that I felt I deserved better than what I had. My rationalization persuaded me to think I could walk away from my husband, my children, my temple covenants, and my Church and find happiness with a stranger.'

"She said, 'The plan was set; the time for my escape was agreed upon. Yet, as if in a last gasp of sanity, my conscience told me to call your husband, my bishop. I say "conscience," but I know that was a spiritual prompting directly from heaven. Almost against my will, I called. The telephone rang and rang and rang. Such was the state of my mind that I thought, "If the bishop doesn't answer, that will be a sign I should go through with my plan."

The phone kept ringing, and I was about to hang up and walk straight into destruction when suddenly I heard your husband's voice. It penetrated my soul like lightning. Suddenly I heard myself sobbing, saying, "Bishop, is that you? I am in trouble. I need help." Your husband came with help, and I am safe today because he answered that telephone.

Gratitude for sacrifices of the bishop's wife

"I look back and realize I was tired and foolish and vulnerable. I love my husband and my children with all my heart. I can't imagine the tragedy my life would be without them. These are still demanding times for our family. I know everyone has them. But we have addressed some of these issues, and things are looking brighter. They always do eventually.' Then she said, 'I don't know you well, but I wish to thank you for supporting your husband in his calling. I don't know what the cost for such service has been to you or to your children, but if on a difficult day there is a particularly personal cost, please know how eternally grateful I will be for the sacrifice people like you make to help rescue people like me.'"

Gratitude for bishop's response to the call

Brothers and sisters, please understand that I am one who preaches emphatically a more manageable, realistic expectation of what our bishops and other leaders can do. I especially feel that a wide range of civic, professional, and other demands which take parents, including and especially mothers, out of homes where children are being raised is among the most serious problems in contemporary society. And because I am adamant about spouses and children deserving sacred, committed time with a husband and father, nine times out of ten I would have been right alongside that wife telling her husband not to answer that telephone. But I

am as grateful in my own way as that young woman was in hers that in this instance this good man followed the prompting of the Spirit and responded to his "call"—in this case, literally—his "call to serve."

Tribute to those who sacrifice to serve

I testify of home and family and marriage, the most precious human possessions of our lives. I testify of the need to protect and preserve them while we find time and ways to serve faithfully in the Church. In what I hope are rare moments when these seem to be in conflict, when we find an hour or a day or a night of crisis when duty and spiritual prompting require our response, in those situations I pay tribute to every wife who has ever sat alone while dinner got cold, every husband who has made his own dinner, which with him as cook was bound to be cold anyway, and every child who has ever been disappointed in a postponed camping trip or a ball game a parent unexpectedly had to miss (and that better not be very often!). I pay tribute to every mission president and his wife, their children, and every senior couple called to serve with them, and all others who for a season miss births and baptisms, weddings and funerals, family and fun experiences in response to a "call to serve." I thank all who, in challenging circumstances across the Church, do the best they can to build the kingdom of God on earth.

I testify of the sacrifice and service of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave everything for us and in that spirit of giving said, "Follow thou me."⁶ "If any man serve me, let him follow me," He said, "and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."⁷ Such service inevitably brings challenging decisions about how to balance priorities and how best to be the disciples He wishes us to be. I thank Him for His divine guidance in helping us make those decisions and for assisting us to find the

right way for all concerned. I thank Him that "he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows"⁸ and that He has called us to do some of the same for each other. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. For the definitive work documenting these experiences, see James B. Allen and others, *Men with a Mission: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles, 1837–1841* (1992). The suffering of Vilate Kimball and Mary Ann Young is noted on pages 267–76.
2. See *Hymns*, no. 249.
3. See Mosiah 4:27.
4. This is a major doctrine too expansive for documentation here. See Moses 5:4–8; 3 Nephi 9:17–21; D&C 59:8–12; 97:8–9.
5. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 68–69.
6. John 21:22.
7. John 12:26.
8. Mosiah 14:4; see also Isaiah 53:4.

President James E. Faust

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will follow immediately thereafter.

As you leave the conference, please obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the family choir from the Salt Lake Hunter Area for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Oh, What Songs of the Heart." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Athos M. Amorim of the Seventy. Elder Nelson.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Blessed are the peacemakers

Among the most memorable of all our family activities have been trips to the Holy Land. For us, visits to that part of the world have been life changing. But now the Holy Land is a cauldron of turmoil and off-limits to those who would like to go there for spiritual enrichment. Virtually all parts of the world are plagued by acts of terror previously unknown. Confusion comes to many who pray for peace but fearfully face this foe of terror.

Peace versus contention

The perilous times in which we live have been prophesied in the scriptures. Our day has been foreseen as one with "fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands; . . . wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places . . . great pollutions upon the face of the earth; . . . and all manner of abominations."¹

That prophecy echoes an earlier scriptural account of the second generation of human life² upon the earth: "In those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his own brother, in . . . seeking for power."³ From the days of Cain and Abel,⁴ Esau and Jacob,⁵ and Joseph who was sold into Egypt,⁶ the flames of hostility have been fueled by family feuding.

Hatred among brothers and neighbors has now reduced sacred cities to sites of sorrow. When I think of the plight of such places, I am reminded of an ancient proverb: "Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath."⁷

Doctrinal direction for bringing peace

Scripture sheds light on both the cause of and the cure for the sickness of human

hatred: "The natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ."⁸

Peace can prevail only when that natural inclination to fight is superseded by self-determination to live on a loftier level. Coming unto Jesus Christ as the "Prince of Peace"⁹ is the pathway to peace on earth and goodwill among men.¹⁰ He made a promise to us: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."¹¹

Jesus taught people how to live with one another. He declared the two great commandments: first, to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,"¹² and the second, to "love thy neighbour as thyself."¹³

Then He added, "Love your enemies, [and] bless them that curse you."¹⁴

He taught the Golden Rule, saying, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."¹⁵ This principle is found in nearly every major religion. Others such as Confucius and Aristotle have also taught it.¹⁶ After all, the gospel did not begin with the birth of the Babe in Bethlehem. It is everlasting. It was proclaimed in the beginning to Adam and Eve. Portions of the gospel have been preserved in many cultures. Even heathen mythologies have been enriched by fragments of truth from earlier dispensations.

Wherever it is found and however it is expressed, the Golden Rule encompasses the moral code of the kingdom of God. It forbids interference by one with the rights of another. It is equally binding upon nations, associations, and individuals. With compassion and forbearance, it replaces the retaliatory reactions of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."¹⁷ If we were

to stay on that old and unproductive path, we would be but blind and toothless.¹⁸

This concept of treating others as one would like to be treated is easy to understand. And it acknowledges the precious nature of each of God's sons and daughters.¹⁹ Scripture asks parents to teach their children not to "fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin." Instead, we "teach them to love one another, and to serve one another."²⁰

Jesus taught the importance of reconciliation and resolution of dispute on a personal basis. He said:

"Whosoever is angry with his brother . . . shall be in danger of the judgment. . . .

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

"Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."²¹

The Master Teacher taught us to "forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

"But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."²²

Jesus declared that a day of judgment would come. All individuals will give an account of their mortal lives and of how they have treated other people.²³

Civic obligations

The commandments to love God and neighbor are interrelated. We cannot fully love God without loving our neighbor. We cannot fully love our neighbor without loving God. Men really are brothers because God really is our Father. Nevertheless, scriptures are studded with stories of contention and combat. They strongly condemn wars of aggression but sustain obligations of citizens to defend their families and their freedoms.²⁴ Because "we be-

lieve in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law,"²⁵ members of this Church will be called into military service of many nations. "We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society."²⁶

During the Second World War, when members of the Church were forced to fight on opposing sides, the First Presidency affirmed that "the state is responsible for the civil control of its citizens or subjects, for their political welfare, and for the carrying forward of political policies, domestic and foreign. . . . But the Church itself, as such, has no responsibility for these policies, [other] than urging its members fully to render . . . loyalty to their country."²⁷

Peace is possible

Because of the long history of hostility upon the earth, many feel that peace is beyond hope. I disagree. Peace is possible. We can learn to love our fellow human beings throughout the world. Whether they be Jewish, Islamic, or fellow Christians, whether Hindu, Buddhist, or other, we can live together with mutual admiration and respect, without forsaking our religious convictions. Things we have in common are greater than are our differences. Peace is a prime priority that pleads for our pursuit. Old Testament prophets held out hope, and so should we. The Psalmist said, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."²⁸ "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth."²⁹

Abraham's example of peace

Father Abraham was uniquely called a "Friend of God."³⁰ Peace was one of Abraham's highest priorities. He sought

to be a "prince of peace."³¹ His influence could loom large in our present pursuit of peace. His sons Ishmael and Isaac, though born of different mothers, overcame their differences when engaged in a common cause. After their father died, they worked together to bury the mortal remains of their exalted father.³² Their descendants could well follow that pattern.

Abraham's posterity has a divinely decreed potential. The Lord declared that Ishmael would become a great nation³³ and that the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would bless all the nations of the earth.³⁴

So the descendants of Abraham, entrusted with great promises of infinite influence, are in a pivotal position to emerge as peacemakers. Chosen by the Almighty, they can direct their powerful potential toward peace.

Resolution of present political problems will require much patience and negotiation. The process would be enhanced greatly if pursued prayerfully.

Fulfilling Isaiah's prophecies of hope

Isaiah prophesied of hope for our day. Speaking of the gathering of Israel and the Restoration of the Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith, Isaiah wrote:

"It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people. . . .

"And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."³⁵

These prophecies of hope could materialize if leaders and citizens of nations would apply the teachings of Jesus Christ. Ours could then be an age of unparalleled peace and progress. The barbarism of the past would be buried. War with its horrors would be relegated to the realm of maudlin memory. Aims of nations would be mu-

tually supportive. Peacemakers could lead in the art of arbitration, give relief to the needy, and bring hope to those who fear. Of such patriots, future generations would shout praises, and our Eternal God would pass judgments of glory.

Follow the pathway of the Prince of Peace

The hope of the world is the Prince of Peace—our Creator, Savior, Jehovah, and Judge. He offers us the good life, the abundant life, and eternal life. Peaceful—even prosperous—living can come to those who abide His precepts³⁶ and follow His pathway to peace. This I declare to all the world.

Church members should proclaim peace

Now, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, what does the Lord expect of us? As a Church, we must "renounce war and proclaim peace."³⁷ As individuals, we should "follow after the things which make for peace."³⁸ We should be personal peacemakers. We should live peacefully—as couples, families, and neighbors. We should live by the Golden Rule. We have writings of the descendants of Judah as now merged with writings of the descendants of Ephraim.³⁹ We should employ them and expand our circle of love to embrace the whole human family. We should bring divine love and revealed doctrines of restored religion to our neighbors and friends. We should serve them according to our abilities and opportunities. We should keep our principles on a high level and stand for the right. We should continue to gather scattered Israel from the four corners of the earth and offer the ordinances and covenants that seal families together forever. These blessings we are to bring to people of all nations.

As we so live, our Master will bless us. He provided this promise: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea,

I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”⁴⁰

Ours is His supernal cause. Ours is the cause of eternal glory for all human-kind. And as peacemakers, we shall be called the children of God. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Mormon 8:29–31; see also 2 Timothy 3:1–7, 12–13; Doctrine and Covenants 45:26–27.
2. Dating back to the time of Seth, son of Adam and Eve.
3. Moses 6:15.
4. See Genesis 4:8–10.
5. See Genesis 27:41.
6. See Genesis 37:28.
7. Proverbs 29:8.
8. Mosiah 3:19.
9. Isaiah 9:6.
10. See Luke 2:14.
11. Matthew 5:9; see also 3 Nephi 12:9; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 5:11.
12. Matthew 22:37.
13. Matthew 22:39; see also Luke 10:27; Doctrine and Covenants 59:5–6.
14. Matthew 5:44.
15. Matthew 7:12; see also Luke 6:31; 3 Nephi 14:12.
16. See B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (1909–11), 3:492–93.
17. Matthew 5:38; see also Exodus 21:24–27; Leviticus 24:20.
18. See Joseph Stein, *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), 142.
19. See Matthew 25:40; Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
20. Mosiah 4:14–15.
21. Matthew 5:22–24; see also 3 Nephi 12:22–24; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 5:24–26.
22. Mark 11:25–26; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 11:27–28.
23. See Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:10–12; 1 John 4:16–21; Alma 41:3; 3 Nephi 27:16–22.
24. See Alma 43:45–47; 46:11–12, 19–20; 48:11–16.
25. Articles of Faith 1:12.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 134:1.
27. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 6:155–56.
28. Psalm 46:1.
29. Psalm 46:9.
30. James 2:23; see also 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8. Long ago our Creator made a covenant with Abraham which was to apply to “a thousand generations” (Deuteronomy 7:9; see also 1 Chronicles 16:15; Psalm 105:8). It is to be fulfilled in the latter days (see 1 Nephi 15:13, 18; D&C 124:58; 132:30).
31. Abraham 1:2.
32. See Genesis 25:9. Abraham’s original name, Abram, means “exalted father” (see Bible Dictionary, “Abraham,” 601).
33. See Genesis 21:13, 18.
34. See Genesis 17:19, 21; 21:12; 22:18; 28:13–14; 35:9–12; Exodus 32:13; Deuteronomy 9:5; Abraham 2:11; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 17:25.
35. Isaiah 11:11–12; see also Romans 15:12.
36. See 2 Chronicles 20:20; Matthew 6:24–33; John 10:10; 1 Nephi 2:20; 4:14; 2 Nephi 1:9, 20; 4:4; Jarom 1:9; Mosiah 1:7; 2:22, 31; Alma 9:13; 36:1, 30; 37:13; 38:1; 48:25; 50:20; Helaman 3:20; Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
37. Doctrine and Covenants 98:16.
38. Romans 14:19.
39. See Ezekiel 37:16–19; 2 Nephi 3:12.
40. Isaiah 41:10.

The choir sang “Oh, What Songs of the Heart.”

Elder Athos M. Amorím offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 5, 2002, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Provo, Utah. Andrew Crane directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session of the 172nd semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, Assembly Hall, BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries around the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Provo, Utah, under the direction of Andrew Crane, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Come, All Ye Sons of God." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing "O Thou Rock of Our Salvation." President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will then address us. He will be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir sang "Come, All Ye Sons of God."

Elder Lynn G. Robbins offered the invocation.

The choir sang "O Thou Rock of Our Salvation."

President Boyd K. Packer

Patriarchal blessing a shield, protection

Fifty-eight years ago I knocked on the door of J. Roland Sandstrom, patriarch of the Santa Ana California Stake, with a recommend from my bishop to receive a patriarchal blessing. We had never met and would not meet again for 14 years. We met again 15 years later. This time, as one of the Twelve, I blessed him the day before he died.

The blessing was delivered by mail to my barracks at an air force base where I was stationed. I did not know then, as I know now, that a patriarch has prophetic insight, that his blessing would be more

than a guide to me. It has been a shield and a protection.

Three kinds of patriarchs

The revelation states that "it is the duty of the Twelve, in all large branches of the church, to ordain evangelical ministers, as they shall be designated unto them by revelation."¹

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "An Evangelist is a Patriarch. . . . Wherever the Church of Christ is established in the earth, there should be a Patriarch for the benefit of the posterity of the Saints, as it was with Jacob in giving his patriarchal blessing unto his sons."²

The scriptures speak of three kinds of patriarchs: fathers of families,³ the prophet leaders of ancient times, and the stake patriarch, an ordained office in the Melchizedek Priesthood.⁴

The father is a patriarch to his family and can and should give father's blessings to his children.

The calling of patriarchs

Until a few years ago, every stake patriarch was called and ordained by a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. When the number of stakes increased, this responsibility was delegated to the stake president.

Like the other offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood—elders, high priests, Seventies, and Apostles—the stake patriarch is ordained rather than set apart.

The stake president submits a name to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Each name is carefully and prayerfully considered. Once approved, the patriarch is sustained in stake conference, then ordained. He then, with prophetic insights, will pronounce blessings upon the heads of those who come recommended by the bishop of their ward.

Guidelines for patriarchs and blessings

There is a publication, *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs*. It instructs the stake president and the patriarch about this sacred office. This publication was discussed for years by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. Each time it was reviewed, it was reduced in size. One senior brother said, "Brethren, we must not get between the Lord and His patriarchs."

We now ask each stake president and each patriarch to reread this brief document. Read it more than once.

Patriarchs do not advertise for blessings. Members should seek blessings as they feel inspired to do so. There is no fixed age at which one may receive a patri-

archal blessing. The bishop ensures that the member is of sufficient age and maturity to understand the meaning and significance of the blessing.

A patriarchal blessing is recorded and transcribed by one who is assigned by the stake president. That blessing becomes a very personal treasure.

Except for members of the immediate family, we should not permit others to read our blessing, nor should we ask others to interpret it. Neither the patriarch nor the bishop can or should interpret it.

An inspired calling

When the Twelve called and ordained patriarchs, we shared experiences. We learned the Lord has a special interest in the patriarch, who holds a unique position in the Church.

I recall a conference where the patriarch was very old. While his ordination would remain in force, it was time that he be excused from giving blessings.

The stake president recommended a man with much leadership experience. However, I did not get the feeling that he should be the patriarch.

I knew that the First Presidency had said to stake presidents: "Because a man has filled with credit a presiding office and has attained a good age is no reason why he should or should not make a good patriarch. . . . [He should be one who has] developed within [him] the spirit of the patriarchs; in fact, this should be [his] leading characteristic, and [he] should be [a man] of wisdom, possessed of the gift and spirit of blessing as well."⁵

As the evening meeting was about to begin, an older man came partway down the aisle and, unable to find a seat, went to the back of the chapel. He was not quite as well dressed as most of the others and obviously had spent much time out-of-doors.

I whispered to the stake president, "Who is that man?"

Sensing what was on my mind, he said, "Oh, I don't think he could be our patriarch. He lives at the far edge of an outlying ward and has never held any leadership in a bishopric or high council."

He was invited to give the opening prayer, and he had said but a few words when that confirmation came, as it does by revelation, "This is the patriarch."

As I recall, he had six sons and one daughter. The youngest was then serving a mission, as had his older brothers, who were married and scattered around the country, all serving faithfully in the Church.

"What about your daughter?" I asked.

"Oh," he said, "you have met her. She is the wife of a counselor in the stake presidency."

I thought, "A patriarch—this man is a patriarch indeed!"

Before the general session, I met the aging patriarch in the foyer and said, "We are going to give you some help today."

He said, "Oh, thank you! I would appreciate that very, very much."

I said, "Let me give you the name of the new patriarch; then you and I and the stake president will be the only ones who know."

When I named the man, he was startled and said, "Isn't *that* interesting! I saw him among the people, coming into the building, and said to myself, 'Wouldn't he make a wonderful patriarch?'" It was an inspiring confirmation from the old patriarch.

There is nothing like this office in all of the Church or in all of the world.

Stake presidents' watch care of patriarchs

Stake presidents must provide very careful, special watch care over the patriarch. You should have him sit on the stand and be recognized.

On regular occasions, perhaps twice a year, you should interview the patriarch and read some of his blessings. Remind him that each blessing should be individual

and special to the member. The periodic reading of blessings must not be neglected by the stake president.

I once ordained a patriarch who was overcome with the responsibility. For months he could not get himself to give a blessing. Finally he asked his stake president if he might write a paragraph as a model introduction to any patriarchal blessing. The stake president approved.

Later he told me this: "When the first young man came for a blessing, because I had memorized this prepared introduction, I felt comfortable. I laid my hands on his head, and I did not use one word of it. That day I learned whose blessings they are. They are not my blessings but are dictated by the Spirit."

Elements of a patriarchal blessing

It has been said that a patriarchal blessing is a "[paragraph] from the book of your possibilities." If we read our patriarchal blessings, we will see what the spirit of prophecy has held up to us as to what each of us can become.⁶

An essential part of a patriarchal blessing is the declaration of lineage. By careful study of the scriptures, a patriarch becomes familiar with the patriarchal order. He learns the destiny of the tribes of Israel.

The Brethren have taught:

"In giving a blessing the patriarch may declare our lineage—that is, that we are of Israel, therefore of the family of Abraham, and of a specific tribe of Jacob. In the great majority of cases, Latter-day Saints are of the tribe of Ephraim, the tribe to which has been committed the leadership of the Latter-day work. Whether this lineage is of blood or adoption does not matter (Pearl of Great Price, Abraham, 2:10). This is very important, for it is through the lineage of Abraham alone that the mighty blessings of the Lord for His children on earth are to be consummated (Genesis 12:2, 3; Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 2:11).

"Then, the patriarch, looking into the future, enumerates the blessings and promises, some special, others general, to which the person of the proper lineage . . . is entitled; and through his authority seals them upon him, so that they may be his forever through faithfulness."⁷

Since there are many bloodlines running in each of us, two members of one family might be declared as being of different tribes in Israel.

Whom a patriarch may bless

A patriarch may give patriarchal blessings to his own children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who come recommended by their bishop.

When we receive requests for exceptions, for one to receive a blessing from an uncle or some favorite family friend, we invite them to follow the order and receive their blessing from the patriarch in their own stake.

In mission districts or in stakes where there is no patriarch, members may receive a recommend from their bishop or branch president to a patriarch in an adjoining stake.

Promises will be fulfilled

Occasionally a member may feel that their blessing is somewhat less than expected. But as time goes on, they will recognize the power of revelation in it.

Sometimes someone will worry because a promise made in a patriarchal blessing is not yet fulfilled. For instance, a blessing may indicate that a member will be married, and they do not find a companion. That does not mean that the blessing will go unfulfilled. It is good to know that things happen in the Lord's due time, not always in ours. Things of an eternal nature have no boundaries. From the pre-mortal existence to our existence beyond the veils of death, our life is an eternal life.

Circumstances such as advancing age and infirmity, moving out of the stake, or a call to serve a mission may require that the stake president recommend to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that the patriarch be honorably excused from active service.

Light of revelation empowers patriarchs

President Harold B. Lee told of calling a patriarch. He and the stake president had gone to the man's home. He had been out with his sons on the welfare farm all day and was tired and weary and covered with grime.

President Lee said, "I made him more weary when I told him what it was I had come for—that he was to be called as the patriarch to that stake."

After the morning session of conference, where the man had borne a remarkable testimony, they went to a basement office.

The stake president's wife was present and wrote to President Lee:

"As you walked over to put your hands on [his] head, I thought to myself, He is a man with whom we socialize. We have gone on trips with him, to dances. . . . Now part of his responsibility is to declare the lineage from which each one has come in these blessings. He hasn't been a student of ancient languages—how is he going to know?"

" . . . You walked over and put your hands on his head, and a light came from behind you and went right through you and into him. And I thought to myself, Isn't that a strange coincidence that the sunlight has come in just at that moment. And then I realized that there was [no window,] no sunlight. I was witnessing the answer to my question. . . . That light came from somewhere beyond Brother Lee and went through Brother Lee into this patriarch. Then I knew where he was going to get that information—by the revelations of Almighty God."⁸

And so it must be. Whenever a patriarch is ordained or pronounces a blessing, that same light, though it may be unseen, is present. It empowers a patriarch to declare lineage and to give a prophetic blessing, notwithstanding that he himself may be a man of very ordinary capacity.

A holy, sacred office

Do not let the office of stake patriarch be neglected or ignored. It is essential to the spiritual power of a stake.

Now, to stake presidents, watch over the work of your stake patriarch. Keep him close to you. Interview him and read selections from his blessings.

And speaking to the patriarchs, you have been chosen as few other men are chosen. You must live in such a way that through spiritual inspiration you can give prophetic and inspired blessings. Be an exemplary patriarch in your own family. Live to be worthy of the Spirit. And experience the joy of your calling.

The patriarch, who had never seen me before, made a promise that applies to every one of us. He told me to "face toward the sunlight of truth so that the shadow of error, disbelief, doubt and discouragement shall be cast behind you."⁹ Many times I have gained strength from reading that patriarchal blessing, given by an inspired servant of the Lord.

I bear witness that this is a holy office, a sacred office, a blessing to this Church, that it is an example of the blessings that the Lord has established in His Church for the blessing of all of us. And I bear testimony of Him in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:39.
2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 151.
3. Adam counseled and blessed his posterity (see D&C 107:42–56); Jacob blessed his sons and their descendants (see Genesis 49:1–28); Lehi blessed his posterity (see 2 Nephi 4:3–11).
4. The Savior ordained apostles, prophets, and evangelists (see Ephesians 4:11); the duty of the Twelve is to ordain evangelists (see D&C 107:39); Hyrum Smith was to take the office of patriarch (see D&C 124:91–92, 124; 135:1).
5. First Presidency letter, 29 June 1903; see also James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 4:57–58.
6. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1975), 117.
7. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, 3 vols. (1943–51), 1:73–74.
8. *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 488–89.
9. Patriarchal blessing of Boyd K. Packer, 15 Jan. 1944, 2.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Helaman's extraordinary young men

In one of the most powerful and instructive stories in the Book of Mormon, the people of Ammon had covenanted never again to take up weapons for the shedding of blood. But "when they saw the danger, and the many afflictions . . . which the Nephites bore for them, they were moved with compassion and were

desirous to take up arms in the defence of their country" (Alma 53:13). Helaman and his brethren persuaded them to honor their covenant with the Lord.

The scriptural account doesn't tell us who first pointed out that their sons had not made the same covenant their parents had made. I like to think that it was one of the young men who suggested the possi-

bility that he and his peers be allowed to “take up arms, and [call] themselves Nephites. And they entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites, yea, to protect the land unto the laying down of their lives” (Alma 53:16–17).

This was an extraordinary task for a group of 2,000 young men, but they were extraordinary young men. According to the scriptural record:

“They were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.

“Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:20–21).

The rest of the story tells how these young men fought valiantly against the much older and much more experienced Lamanite army. According to their leader, Helaman, “they . . . fought as if with the strength of God; . . . and with such mighty power did they fall upon the Lamanites, that they did frighten them; and for this cause did the Lamanites deliver themselves up as prisoners of war” (Alma 56:56).

Imagine that! These inexperienced young men were so spiritually and physically prepared, and so powerful, that they frightened their foes into surrendering! Although all 2,000 of the young men were wounded in battle at one time or another, not one was killed (see Alma 57:25). Again quoting Helaman, “And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe—that there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power” (Alma 57:26).

A modern battle for souls

Brethren, today we are fighting a battle that in many ways is more perilous,

more fraught with danger than the battle between the Nephites and the Lamanites. Our enemy is cunning and resourceful. We fight against Lucifer, the father of all lies, the enemy of all that is good and right and holy. Truly we live in a time of which Paul prophesied, when “men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:2–5).

Does this sound familiar, brethren? To me it sounds like a night of prime-time television.

These are “perilous times.” We battle literally for the souls of men. The enemy is unforgiving and relentless. He is taking eternal prisoners at an alarming rate. And he shows no sign of letting up.

While we are profoundly grateful for the many members of the Church who are doing great things in the battle for truth and right, I must honestly tell you it still is not enough. We need much more help. And so, as the people of Ammon looked to their sons for reinforcement in the war against the Lamanites, we look to you, my young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood. We need you. Like Helaman’s 2,000 stripling warriors, you also are the spirit sons of God, and you too can be endowed with power to build up and defend His kingdom. We need you to make sacred covenants, just as they did. We need you to be meticulously obedient and faithful, just as they were.

Need for spiritually strong missionaries

What we need now is the greatest generation of missionaries in the history of the Church. We need worthy, qualified, spiritually energized missionaries who, like Helaman’s 2,000 stripling warriors, are

“exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity” and who are “true at all times in whatsoever thing they [are] entrusted” (Alma 53:20).

Listen to those words, my young brethren: *valiant, courage, strength, active, true*. We don’t need spiritually weak and semi-committed young men. We don’t need you to just fill a position; we need your whole heart and soul. We need vibrant, thinking, passionate missionaries who know how to listen to and respond to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. This isn’t a time for spiritual weaklings. We cannot send you on a mission to be reactivated, reformed, or to receive a testimony. We just don’t have time for that. We need you to be filled with “faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God” (D&C 4:5).

Rise up, measure up, prepare to serve

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I call upon you to begin right now—tonight—to be fully and completely worthy. Resolve and commit to yourselves and to God that from this moment forward you will strive diligently to keep your hearts, hands, and minds pure and unsullied from any kind of moral transgression. Resolve to avoid pornography as you would avoid the most insidious disease, for that is precisely what it is. Resolve to completely abstain from tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drugs. Resolve to be honest. Resolve to be good citizens and to abide by the laws of the land in which you live. Resolve that from this night forward you will never defile your body or use language that is vulgar and unbecoming to a bearer of the priesthood.

And that is not all we expect of you, my young brethren. We expect you to have an understanding and a solid testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We expect you to work hard. We expect you to be covenant makers and covenant keepers. We expect you to be missionaries to match our glorious message.

Now, these are high standards. We understand that, but we do not apologize for them. They reflect the Lord’s standards for you to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to enter the temple, to serve as missionaries, and to be righteous husbands and fathers. There’s nothing new in them, nothing you haven’t heard before. But tonight we call upon you, our young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, to rise up, to measure up, and to be fully prepared to serve the Lord.

Many of you are already on this track, and we commend you for your worthiness and determination. For those of you who are not, let tonight be the beginning of your preparation process. If you find yourself wanting in worthiness, resolve to make the appropriate changes—beginning right now. If you think you need to talk to your father and your bishop about any sins you may have committed, don’t wait; do it now. They will help you to repent and change so you can take your place as a member of the greatest generation of missionaries.

How to meet the rising standard

Please understand this: the bar that is the standard for missionary service is being raised. The day of the “repent and go” missionary is over. You know what I’m talking about, don’t you, my young brothers? Some young men have the mistaken idea that they can be involved in sinful behavior and then repent when they’re 18½ so they can go on their mission at 19. While it is true that you can repent of sins, you may or you may not qualify to serve. It is far better to keep yourselves clean and pure and valiant by doing such simple things as:

- Developing a meaningful prayer relationship with your Heavenly Father.
- Keeping the Sabbath day holy.
- Working and putting part of your earnings in a savings account.
- Paying a full and honest tithing.

- Limiting the amount of time spent playing computer games. How many kills you can make in a minute with a computer game will have zero effect on your capacity to be a good missionary.

- Giving the Lord more of your time by studying the scriptures and gaining an understanding of the marvelous message of the Restoration we have for the world.

- Serving others and sharing your testimony with them.

Role of fathers in preparing missionaries

Now, fathers, you have a vital role in this preparation process. We know that the most profound influence on helping young men prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood, marriage, and fatherhood is the family. If your sons understand the basic doctrines required to become a faithful father, they will surely be ready to serve as a full-time missionary. Unfortunately, far too many fathers abdicate this eternal responsibility. You may assume that the bishop and the seminary, Sunday School, and Young Men teachers and leaders are in a better position to motivate and inspire your sons than you are. That simply is not the case. While ecclesiastical leaders are important to your son's priesthood and missionary preparation, the Church exists as a resource to you. It is not a substitute for your inspired teaching, guidance, and correction.

Consequently, if we are "raising the bar" for your sons to serve as missionaries, that means we are also "raising the bar" for you. If we expect more of them, that means we expect more of you and your wife as well. Remember, Helaman's 2,000 stripping warriors were faithful because "they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him" (Alma 53:21)—and that instruction came in their homes.

Some fathers don't think they have the right to ask worthiness questions of their children. They think that is the pur-

view of the bishop alone. Fathers, not only do you have the right to know the worthiness of your children, you have the responsibility. It is your duty to know how your children are doing with regard to their spiritual well-being and progression. You need to monitor carefully the issues and concerns they share with you. Ask specific questions of your children regarding their worthiness, and refuse to settle for anything less than specific answers.

Too often our bishops have to instruct youth to talk to their parents about problems they are having. That procedure should actually flow the other direction. Parents should be so intimately aware of what is going on in their children's lives that they know about the problems before the bishop does. They should be counseling with their children and going with them to their bishops if that becomes necessary for complete repentance. As divinely appointed judges in Israel, the bishop and the stake president determine worthiness and resolve concerns on behalf of the Church; but, fathers, you have an eternal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of your children. Please assume your rightful place as counselor, adviser, and priesthood leader in preparing your sons to bear the Melchizedek Priesthood and to serve as missionaries.

Bishops must judge wisely

Now a word to you bishops. I realize there are many young men who don't have a faithful father in their home. In these cases, use the resources of the Church to see that these Aaronic Priesthood holders are taught by Melchizedek Priesthood brethren who can help them to prepare for their future priesthood service. Upon you bishops and you stake presidents rests the responsibility to recommend only those young men and women whom you judge to be spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared to face today's realities of missionary work. Brethren, judge

wisely and remember: not every young man needs to be called to serve away from his home; some may best serve under your direction as ward missionaries.

To current and returned missionaries

To those of you who are currently serving as full-time missionaries, we thank you for your service. Tonight is a good time for each of you to take a close look at your performance; and if you are not measuring up, your mission president will help you make the necessary changes to be an effective, dedicated servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, to those of you who have already served, please remember that you were released from your missions but not from the Church. You spent two years as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. We expect you to always look and act like one of His disciples. Look the part. Act the part. Don't follow worldly trends and fashions. You are better than that. If you have slipped, then do what is necessary to regain your spiritual balance. The rules for happiness and success after your mission are pretty much the same as they were during your mission: pray hard, work hard, and be obedient. Get busy now and

find your eternal companion to enjoy life with. Serve the Lord together, and raise up the next great generation.

My brethren, I have spoken plainly tonight. I hope you can feel the love and the concern that emanates from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and other Church leaders as we ask you to prepare now to join us in taking the blessings of the restored gospel to all the people on the earth. Each one of you is precious, and we want you to be successful and secure in the battle for the souls of our Heavenly Father's children. May God bless you with the courage to be "true at all times" (Alma 53:20) and with the vision to realize who you are and what the Lord has for you to do, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren. We shall now hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following his remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." At the conclusion of the singing, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will speak to us.

President James E. Faust

Accountability for using the priesthood

My dear brethren of the holy priesthood, I pray for your understanding as I speak to this vast audience tonight. As President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley has accomplished an insurmountable group of tasks. Yet he was once a young Aaronic Priesthood holder like many of you. You young men of the Aaronic Priesthood are going to be the future leaders of the Church. This evening I wish to address my remarks mainly to

you. You need to understand that success—both for yourself and the Church—will depend on your determination to accomplish the work of the Lord. Each of you will need to have faith and confidence to move forward.

Each man and boy listening this evening has been entrusted with the greatest power on earth—the holy priesthood of God. It is the power to act righteously in the name of the Lord to build up the kingdom of God on earth. I remind you "that the rights of the priesthood are insepara-

bly connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.”¹ Priesthood is divine agency, and the Lord will hold us accountable for our use of this great authority.

“I think I can”

I first heard the wonderful story of *The Little Engine That Could* when I was about 10 years old. As a child, I was interested in the story because the train cars were filled with toy animals, toy clowns, jackknives, puzzles, and books, as well as delicious things to eat. However, the engine that was pulling the train over the mountain broke down. The story relates that a big passenger engine came by and was asked to pull the cars over the mountain, but he wouldn’t condescend to pull the little train. Another engine came by, but he wouldn’t stoop to help the little train over the mountain because he was a freight engine. An old engine came by, but he would not help because, he said, “I am so tired. . . . I can not. I can not. I can not.”

Then a little blue engine came down the track, and she was asked to pull the cars over the mountain to the children on the other side. The little engine responded, “I’m not very big. . . . They use me only for switching in the yard. I have never been over the mountain.” But she was concerned about disappointing the children on the other side of the mountain if they didn’t get all of the goodies in the cars. So she said, “I think I can. I think I can. I think I can.” And she hooked herself to the little train. “Puff, puff, chug, chug, went the Little Blue Engine. ‘I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can—I think I can.’” With this attitude, the little engine reached the top of the mountain and went down the other side, saying, “I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could.

I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could.”²

Parable of the talents

At times all of us are called upon to stretch ourselves and do more than we think we can. I’m reminded of President Theodore Roosevelt’s quip, “I am only an average man but, by George, I work harder at it than the average man.”³ We develop our talents first by thinking we can. We are all familiar with the parable of the talents. The Master gave one five talents, another two, and another one, “every man according to his several ability. . . .

“Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

“And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

“But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.”

After a long time the Master asked for an accounting. The one who had received five talents reported that he had gained an additional five talents and received the commendation, “Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.” He that received two talents gained two other talents and also received the promise of a greater dominion. But the one who had received the one talent returned with his single talent, saying, “Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth.”⁴

In accounting for his stewardship, this slothful servant imputed to his master his own character flaws.⁵ He could have at least put the money in circulation and received interest on it instead of burying it in the ground. His talent was taken from him and given to the man who had 10 talents. Then the Lord tells us, “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he

shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."⁶

We may wonder whether it was fair to take the talent from the one who had the least and give it to the one who had the most. From the outset, however, the Lord explains that each man had ability.⁷

Some are too content, passive with talents

Some of us are too content with what we may already be doing. We stand back in the "eat, drink, and be merry" mode when opportunities for growth and development abound. We miss opportunities to build up the kingdom of God because we have the passive notion that someone else will take care of it. The Lord tells us that He will give more to those who are willing. They will be magnified in their efforts, like the little blue engine as it pulled the train up the mountain. But to those who say, "We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have."⁸

The Lord entrusts all of His servants, including every priesthood holder, with spiritual talents. The Lord, who endows us with these talents, tells us, "I believe you can. I believe you can." While we are not all equal in experience, aptitude, and strength, we have different opportunities to employ these spiritual gifts, and we will all be accountable for the use of the gifts and opportunities given to us.

Samuel Brannan's loss of his talents

Church history includes incidents of priesthood holders of great capacity. A few were brilliant but also erratic and unreliable and so lost the spiritual gifts and talents with which the Lord had so richly endowed them. I would like to tell you about one such.

Samuel Brannan led some Saints around Cape Horn on the ship *Brooklyn*. They made a brief stop in Hawaii before docking at San Francisco Bay. He became

convinced that the main body of the Saints should not settle in the Rocky Mountains but should go on to California. So he traveled east and encountered the first party of emigrants under the leadership of Brigham Young in Green River, Wyoming. He used all of his persuasive powers trying to convince Brigham Young to take advantage of the opportunities which he felt California offered. Brigham Young responded, "Let us go to California, and we cannot stay there over five years; but let us stay in the mountains, and we can raise our own potatoes, and eat them; and I calculate to stay here."⁹ Brannan stayed with the main body of the Saints for a few days, but then, because he was headstrong and self-centered, in August of 1847 he headed back to California.

Like the big engine that wouldn't condescend to pull the cars over the mountain, Sam Brannan was not focused on building up the kingdom of God. Instead he was directed toward business and making money. He became the first millionaire in California, with numerous business ventures and extensive land holdings. Because he had been the leader of that group of Saints, President Young asked him to account for the tithing that he had collected from the members of the Church in California, including those involved in the gold rush, but he did not do so. Nor did he use those funds to establish the Church or to help the members there.

For a time and a season, Brannan was very successful in establishing enterprises and acquiring land for his own benefit, but eventually he fell on hard times. His family did not stay together. When he died, he was alone, broken physically, spiritually, and financially. For 16 months no one claimed his body. Eventually it was placed in San Diego's Mount Hope Cemetery. Sam Brannan accomplished much in his life, but in the end he paid a terrible price for not honoring his priesthood stewardship and for failing to follow the prophet of God.¹⁰

Follow the prophet to develop talents

Those of us who now hold the priesthood responsibility of this Church must follow and sustain our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

Like the “little engine that could,” we need to be on the right track and develop our talents. We must remember that the priesthood can only be used for righteous purposes. When used “in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.”¹¹

To stay on the right track, we must honor and sustain those who hold the presiding priesthood keys. We are reminded that many are “called, but few are chosen.”¹² When are we chosen? We are chosen by the Lord only when we have done our best to move this holy work forward through our consecrated efforts and talents. Our efforts must always be guided by the righteous principles set forth by the Lord in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

“By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile.”¹³

Priesthood power is activated by service

The priesthood is given to bless the lives of others. President David O. McKay said: “The very essence of Priesthood is eternal. As it finds expression in life it manifests power. We can conceive of the power of Priesthood as being potentially existent as an impounded reservoir of water. Such power becomes dynamic and productive of good only when the liberated force becomes active in valleys, fields,

gardens and happy homes; so the principle of power is manifested only as it becomes active in the lives of men, turning their hearts and desires toward God, and prompting service to their fellow men.”¹⁴ If we aren’t serving others, then the priesthood really doesn’t benefit us because it is not a passive power. Brethren, be generous with the power of blessing which comes through the priesthood, especially to members of your own family. Remember that the Lord has said, “Whomsoever you bless I will bless.”¹⁵

In preparing for the time when we will account to the Lord for our own personal priesthood stewardship, where will we be? Remember that “the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there.”¹⁶

Be like the little engine that could

I hope we will not be like the big passenger engine, too proud to accept the assignments we are given. I pray that we will not be like the person in the well-known poem who said:

Father, where shall I work today?
And my love flowed warm and free.
Then He pointed out a tiny spot
And said, “Tend that for me.”
I answered quickly, “Oh no; not that!
Why, no one would ever see,
No matter how well my work was done;
Not that little place for me.”
And the word He spoke, it was not stern;
He answered me tenderly:
“Ah, little one, search that heart of thine.
Art thou working for them or for me?
Nazareth was a little place,
And so was Galilee.”¹⁷

I also hope that we will not be like the freight engine, unwilling to go the “extra mile” in service. The Master taught us that “whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”¹⁸ Some of the most

rewarding times of our lives are those “extra mile” hours given in service when the body says it wants to relax, but our better self emerges and says, “Here am I; send me.”¹⁹

Or, like the old engine, do we say we are too tired—or too old? I remind you that President Hinckley is 92 and still going strong!

I hope we can all be like the “little engine that could.” It wasn’t very big, had been used only for switching cars, and had never been over a mountain, but it was willing. That little engine hooked on to the stranded train, chugged up to the top of the mountain, and puffed down the mountain, saying, “I thought I could.” Each of us must climb mountains that we have never climbed before.

Brethren, great is our work, and heavy are our priesthood responsibilities. I hope and pray that we can go forward with this holy work humbly, prayerfully, and unitedly under the guiding Spirit of the Lord and the direction of President Gordon B. Hinckley, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
2. *The Little Engine That Could*, retold by Watty Piper, from Mabel C. Bragg, *The Pony Engine* (1930).

3. In Evan Esar, ed., *Dictionary of Humorous Quotations* (1964), 151.
4. Matthew 25:15–25.
5. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 582.
6. Matthew 25:29.
7. See Matthew 25:15.
8. 2 Nephi 28:30.
9. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 475.
10. See John K. Carmack, “California: What Went Right and What Went Wrong,” *Nauvoo Journal*, spring 1998, 5–6, 8–9; Paul Bailey, “Sam Brannan and the Sad Years,” *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1951, 232–34, 282–87.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 121:34.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
14. *Pathways to Happiness* (1957), 230.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 132:47.
16. 2 Nephi 9:41.
17. Meade McGuire, quoted in Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 50; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 39.
18. 3 Nephi 12:41.
19. 2 Nephi 16:8.

The choir and congregation sang
“Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

President Thomas S. Monson

Master, the tempest is raging

The singing of the men’s choir this evening has lighted memory’s fire and brought to my mind the songs I sang when I was a boy. With fervor we would render:

Put your shoulder to the wheel;
push along.
Do your duty with a heart full of song.
We all have work; let no one shirk.
Put your shoulder to the wheel.¹

We had a chorister who taught us boys how to sing. We had to sing. Sister Stella Waters would wave the baton within inches of our noses and beat time with a heavy foot that made the floor creak.

If we responded properly, Sister Waters let us choose a favorite hymn to sing. Inevitably the selection was:

Master, the tempest is raging!
The billows are tossing high!

The sky is o'ershadowed with blackness.

No shelter or help is nigh.

Carest thou not that we perish?

How canst thou lie asleep

When each moment so madly is threat'ning

A grave in the angry deep?

And then the assuring chorus:

The winds and the waves shall obey thy will:

Peace, be still; peace, be still.

Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea

Or demons or men or whatever it be,
No waters can swallow the ship where lies

The Master of ocean and earth and skies.

They all shall sweetly obey thy will:

Peace, be still; peace, be still.

They all shall sweetly obey thy will:

Peace, peace, be still.²

Demons that stalk our lives

As a boy, I could fathom somewhat the danger of a storm-tossed sea. However, I had but little understanding of other demons that can stalk our lives, destroy our dreams, smother our joys, and detour our journey toward the celestial kingdom of God.

A list of destructive demons is lengthy; and each man, young or old, knows the ones with which he must contend. I'll name but a few: the Demon of *Greed*, the Demon of *Dishonesty*, the Demon of *Debt*, the Demon of *Doubt*, the Demon of *Drugs*, and those twin Demons of *Immodesty* and *Immorality*. Each of these demons can wreak havoc with our lives. A combination of them can spell utter destruction.

Greed

Concerning *greed*, the counsel from Ecclesiastes speaks caution: "He that loveth

silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase."³

Jesus counseled, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."⁴

We must learn to separate need from greed.

Dishonesty

When we speak of the demon of *dishonesty*, we can find it in a variety of locations. One such place is in school. Let us avoid cheating, falsifying, taking advantage of others, or anything like unto it. Let integrity be our standard.

In decision making, ask not, "What will others think?" but rather, "What will I think of myself?"

Debt

Enticements to embrace the demon of *debt* are thrust upon us many times each day. I quote the counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley:

"I am troubled by the huge consumer installment debt which hangs over the people of the nation, including our own people. . . .

"We are beguiled by seductive advertising. Television carries the enticing invitation to borrow up to 125 percent of the value of one's home. But no mention is made of interest. . . .

"I recognize that it may be necessary to borrow to get a home, of course. But let us buy a home that we can afford and thus ease the payments which will constantly hang over our heads without mercy or respite for as long as 30 years."⁵

I would add: We must not allow our yearnings to exceed our earnings.

Drugs

In discussing the demon of *drugs*, I include, of course, alcohol. Drugs impair our ability to think, to reason, and to make

prudent and wise choices. Often they result in violence and in child and wife abuse, and they can provoke conduct that brings pain and suffering to those who are innocent. "Just say no to drugs" is an effective statement of one's determination. And this can be buttressed by the scripture:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."⁶

Immodesty, immorality, and pornography

When I consider the demons who are twins—even *immodesty* and *immorality*—I should make them triplets and include *pornography*. They all three go together.

In the interpretation of Lehi's dream, we find a rather apt description of the destructiveness of pornography:

"And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost."⁷

A modern-day Apostle, Elder Hugh B. Brown, has declared, "Any immodesty inducing impure thoughts is a desecration of the body—that temple in which the Holy Spirit may dwell."⁸

I commend to you tonight a jewel from the *Improvement Era*. It was published in 1917 but is equally applicable here and now:

"The current and common custom of indecency in dress, the flood of immoral fiction in printed literature, in the drama, and notably in [motion] picture[s] . . . , the toleration of immodesty in every-day conversation and demeanor, are doing deadly work in the fostering of soul-destroying vice."⁹

Alexander Pope, in his inspired *Essay on Man*, declared:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.¹⁰

Perhaps a fitting summation pertaining to this demon can be found in the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."¹¹

For each of us it is infinitely better to hear and heed the call of conscience, for conscience always warns us as a friend before punishing us as a judge.

The Lord Himself gives us the final word: "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."¹²

A lesson in patience and calmness

Brethren, there is one responsibility that no man can evade. That is the effect of personal influence.

Our influence is surely felt in our respective families. Sometimes we fathers forget that once we too were boys, and boys at times can be vexing to parents.

I recall how much, as a youngster, I liked dogs. One day I took my wagon and placed a wooden orange crate in it and went looking for dogs. At that time, dogs were everywhere to be found: at school, walking along the sidewalks, or exploring vacant lots, of which there were many. As I would find a dog and capture it, I placed it in the crate, took it home, locked it in the coal shed, and turned the latch on the door. That day I think I brought home six dogs of varying sizes and made them my prisoners after this fashion. I had no idea what I would do with all those dogs, so I didn't reveal my deed to anyone.

Dad came home from work and, as was his custom, took the coal bucket and

went to the coal shed to fill it. Can you imagine his shock and utter consternation as he opened the door and immediately faced six dogs, all attempting to escape at once? As I recall, Dad flushed a little bit, and then he calmed down and quietly told me, "Tommy, coal sheds are for coal. Other people's dogs rightfully belong to them." By observing him, I learned a lesson in patience and calmness.

Patience with a son and his water snake

It is a good thing I did, for a similar event occurred in my life with our youngest son, Clark.

Clark has always liked animals, birds, reptiles—anything that is alive. Sometimes that resulted in a little chaos in our home. One day in his boyhood he came home from Provo Canyon with a water snake, which he named Herman.

Right off the bat Herman got lost. Sister Monson found him in the silverware drawer. Water snakes have a way of being where you least expect them. Well, Clark moved Herman to the bathtub, put a plug in the drain, put a little water in, and had a sign taped to the back of the tub which read, "Don't use this tub. It belongs to Herman." So we had to use the other bathroom while Herman occupied that sequestered place.

But then one day, to our amazement, Herman disappeared. His name should have been *Houdini*. He was gone! So the next day Sister Monson cleaned up the tub and prepared it for normal use. Several days went by.

One evening I decided it was time to take a leisurely bath, so I filled the tub with a lot of warm water, and then I peacefully lay down in the tub for a few moments of relaxation. I was lying there just pondering, when the soapy water reached the level of the overflow drain and began to flow through it. Can you imagine my surprise when, with my eyes focused on that drain, Herman came swimming out,

right for my face? I yelled out to my wife, "Frances! Here comes Herman!"

Well, Herman was captured again, put in a foolproof box, and we made a little excursion to Vivian Park in Provo Canyon and there released Herman into the beautiful waters of the South Fork Creek. Herman was never again to be seen by us.

Let every man learn his duty

There appears in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 107, verse 99, a brief but direct admonition to each priesthood bearer: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence." I have always taken this charge seriously and have attempted to live up to its direction.

In the recesses of my mind, I hear over and over again the guiding direction which President John Taylor gave to the brethren of the priesthood: "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those you might have saved, had you done your duty."¹³

Heed promptings in doing your duty

In the performance of our responsibilities, I have learned that when we heed a silent prompting and act upon it without delay, our Heavenly Father will guide our footsteps and bless our lives and the lives of others. I know of no experience more sweet or feeling more precious than to heed a prompting only to discover that the Lord has answered another person's prayer through you.

Perhaps just one example will suffice. One day just over a year ago, after taking care of matters at the office, I felt a strong impression to visit an aged widow who was a patient at St. Joseph Villa here in Salt Lake City. I drove there directly.

When I went to her room, I found it empty. I asked an attendant concerning

her whereabouts and was directed to a lounge area. There I found this sweet widow visiting with her sister and another friend. We had a pleasant conversation together.

As we were talking, a man came to the door of the room to obtain a can of soda water from the vending machine. He glanced at me and said, "Why, you are Tom Monson."

"Yes," I replied. "And you look like a Hemingway." He acknowledged that he was Stephen Hemingway, the son of Alfred Eugene Hemingway, who had served as my counselor when I was a bishop many years ago and whom I called Gene. Stephen told me that his father was there in the same facility and was near death. He had been calling my name, and the family had wanted to contact me but had been unable to find a telephone number for me.

I excused myself immediately and went with Stephen up to the room of my former counselor, where others of his children were gathered, his wife having passed away some years previous. The family members regarded my meeting Stephen in the lounge area as a response by our Heavenly Father to their great desire that I would see their father before he died and answer his call. I too felt that this was the case, for if Stephen had not entered the room in which I was visiting at precisely the time he did, I would not have known that Gene was even in that facility.

We gave a blessing to him. A spirit of peace prevailed. We had a lovely visit, after which I left.

The following morning a phone call revealed that Gene Hemingway had passed away—just 20 minutes after he had received the blessing from his son and me.

I expressed a silent prayer of thanks to Heavenly Father for His guiding influence which prompted my visit to St. Joseph Villa and led me to my dear friend Alfred Eugene Hemingway.

Peace, be still

I like to think that Gene Hemingway's thoughts that evening, as we basked in the Spirit's glow, participated in humble prayer, and pronounced a priesthood blessing, echoed the words mentioned in the hymn "Master, the Tempest Is Raging," which I cited at the beginning of my message:

Linger, O blessed Redeemer!
Leave me alone no more,
And with joy I shall make the blest
harbor
And rest on the blissful shore.

I still love that hymn and testify to you tonight as to the comfort it offers:

Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed
sea
Or demons or men or whatever it be,
No waters can swallow the ship where
lies
The Master of ocean and earth and
skies.
They all shall sweetly obey thy will:
Peace, be still.¹⁴

His words in holy writ are sufficient: "Be still, and know that I am God."¹⁵ I testify to this truth in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel," *Hymns*, no. 252.
2. "Master, the Tempest Is Raging," *Hymns*, no. 105.
3. Ecclesiastes 5:10.
4. Luke 12:15.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 70–71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53.
6. 1 Corinthians 3:16–17.
7. 1 Nephi 12:17.
8. *The Abundant Life* (1965), 65.
9. Joseph F. Smith, "Unchastity the Dominant Evil of the Age," *Improvement Era*, June 1917, 742.
10. In John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (1968), 409.

11. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 133:5.
13. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 6 Aug. 1878, 1.
14. *Hymns*, no. 105.
15. Psalm 46:10.

President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren. We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Heavy load on local leaders

Now, my beloved brethren, I speak with a desire to be helpful. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to guide me.

I need not tell you that we have become a very large and complex Church. Our program is so vast and our reach is so extensive that it is difficult to comprehend. We are a Church of lay leadership. What a remarkable and wonderful thing that is. It must ever remain so. It must never move in the direction of an extensive paid ministry. But we know that the administrative load is very heavy on our bishops and stake presidents, as well as some others. An awareness of that fact has led the Presidency and the Twelve to hold a number of meetings, some of them long and interesting, in which, in effect, we have taken the Church apart and then put it together again. Our objective has been to see whether there might be some programs we could do away with. But as we have analyzed these, we have not seen much that could be dropped. To drop one is like giving away one of your children. You haven't the heart to do it. But I wish to assure you that we are aware of the burdens you carry and the time you spend. In this priesthood meeting I wish to men-

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to this Aaronic Priesthood choir for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "We'll Bring the World His Truth." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy.

tion a few of the items we have discussed. I think you will note that we have made some progress, although it may be small.

I shall speak to you about a number of miscellaneous items.

Temple recommends valid for two years

We have determined, first, that effective November 1, temple recommends will remain valid for two years instead of one. This should cut the time that bishops and stake presidents and their counselors have to spend in interviews for temple recommends. Of course, if at any time the recommend holder becomes unworthy of going to the temple, then it will become the responsibility of the bishop or stake president to pick up the individual's recommend.

But experience has shown that there are very few such incidents. And so this will become the program, brethren. Beginning the first of November, regardless of the date written on the recommend, the term will be extended for one year. Recommends will then be renewed every two years rather than the present one year. We hope this will be beneficial. We are confident that it will.

Missionary farewells and open houses

Another item.

Elder Ballard has spoken to you concerning missionaries. I wish to endorse what he said. I hope that our young men, and our young women, will rise to the challenge he has set forth. We must raise the bar on the worthiness and qualifications of those who go into the world as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we have an interesting custom in the Church. Departing missionaries are accorded a farewell. In some wards this has become a problem. Between outgoing missionaries and returning missionaries, most sacrament meetings are devoted to farewells and homecomings.

No one else in the Church has a farewell when entering a particular service. We never have a special farewell meeting for a newly called bishop, for a stake president, for a Relief Society president, for a General Authority, or anyone else of whom I can think. Why should we have missionary farewells?

The First Presidency and the Twelve, after most prayerful and careful consideration, have reached the decision that the present program of missionary farewells should be modified.

The departing missionary will be given the opportunity to speak in a sacrament meeting for 15 or 20 minutes. But parents and siblings will not be invited to do so. There might be two or more departing missionaries who speak in the same service. The meeting will be entirely in the hands of the bishop and will not be arranged by the family. There will not be special music or anything of that kind.

We know this will be a great disappointment to many families. Mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, and friends have participated in the past. We ask that you accept this decision. Where a farewell has already been arranged, it may go forward. But none in the traditional sense

should be planned for the future. We are convinced that when all aspects of the situation are considered, this is a wise decision. Please accept it, my dear brethren. I extend this plea also to the sisters, particularly the mothers.

We hope also that holding elaborate open houses after the sacrament meeting at which the missionary speaks will not prevail. Members of the family may wish to get together. We have no objection to this. However, we ask that there be no public reception to which large numbers are invited.

Missionary service is such a wonderful experience that it brings with it its own generous reward. And when a missionary returns to his family and his ward, he may again be given opportunity to speak in a sacrament meeting.

Report on the Perpetual Education Fund

The next item.

Let me give you a brief report on the Perpetual Education Fund, which was established a year and a half ago at the April conference. The program is now going forward on a sound footing. We have a substantial financial corpus contributed by faithful Latter-day Saints. We hope more will be forthcoming to make it possible to assist a larger number of those worthy of help.

Today some 5,000 men and women, most of them young, are being educated who otherwise might not have had the opportunity. Think of the consequences of this. These faithful Latter-day Saints are offered a ladder by which they may climb out of the condition of poverty in which they and their forebears have lived. Their earning capacity is being greatly increased. Their power of leadership is being enhanced. They will become men and women of substance, members of the Church who will carry forward its program in a manner previously unimagined.

I give you one example. The first young woman to receive a loan has now completed a year of training and has applied for funds for her last year of training. She is studying to become a dental assistant.

Previous to this she worked in a restaurant earning \$130.00 a month. It is anticipated that when she completes her training, in a short time she will receive \$650.00 a month to begin with—an immediate 500 percent increase. That will grow through the years.

What a marvelous difference a few dollars make when they are properly applied. Now, you multiply her experience by 5,000. It is a most remarkable thing to contemplate. Students are receiving training to become mechanics, systems analysts, administrative consultants, nursing technicians, information systems technicians, nurses, hospital workers, computer programmers, computer engineers, fashion designers, accountants, electricians, English teachers, bakers, hotel administrators, and graphic designers, to name a few.

The possibilities are endless, and what is happening is indeed a wonderful and miraculous thing.

Be committed to family home evening

The next item I wish to mention is family home evening. We are fearful that this very important program is fading in too many areas. Brethren, there is nothing more important than your families. You know that. This program was begun back in 1915, 87 years ago, when President Joseph F. Smith urged the Latter-day Saints to set aside one evening a week devoted specifically to the family. It was to be a time of teaching, of reading the scriptures, of cultivating talents, of discussing family matters. It was not to be a time to attend athletic events or anything of the kind. Of course, if there is family activity

of such a kind occasionally, that may be all right. But in the increasingly frantic rush of our lives it is so important that fathers and mothers sit down with their children, pray together, instruct them in the ways of the Lord, consider their family problems, and let the children express their talents. I am satisfied that this program came under the revelations of the Lord in response to a need among the families of the Church.

If there was a need 87 years ago, that need is certainly much greater today.

The decision was made that Monday evening would be devoted to this family activity. In those areas where there are large numbers of Church members, school officials and others honored the program and did not schedule events on that evening.

Now there appears to be a growing tendency to schedule other events on Monday night. We respectfully request that our public school officials and others let us have this one evening a week to carry forward this important and traditional program. We ask that they not schedule events that will require the time of children on Monday evenings. We are confident that they will realize that it is most important that families have the opportunity, at least once a week, to be together without conflicting loyalties. We shall be grateful indeed if they will cooperate in this matter. And we urge, in the strongest terms possible, that fathers and mothers regard most seriously this opportunity and challenge to make of Monday evening a time sacred to the family.

I have received not a few invitations to participate in community Monday gatherings of one kind or another. I have uniformly turned down these invitations with appreciation, but with the explanation that I have reserved Monday as family home evening time. I earnestly hope that each of you will do the same.

Become self-reliant in family welfare

The next item.

Brethren, I wish to urge again the importance of self-reliance on the part of every individual Church member and family.

None of us knows when a catastrophe might strike. Sickness, injury, unemployment may affect any of us.

We have a great welfare program, with facilities for such things as grain storage in various areas. It is important that we do this. But the best place to have some food set aside is within our homes, together with a little money in savings. The best welfare program is our own welfare program. Five or six cans of wheat in the home are better than a bushel in the welfare granary.

I do not predict any impending disaster. I hope that there will not be one. But prudence should govern our lives. Everyone who owns a home recognizes the need for fire insurance. We hope and pray that there will never be a fire. Nevertheless, we pay for insurance to cover such a catastrophe, should it occur.

We ought to do the same with reference to family welfare.

We can begin ever so modestly. We can begin with one week's food supply and gradually build it to a month and then to three months. I am speaking now of food to cover basic needs. As all of you recognize, this counsel is not new. But I fear that so many feel that a long-term food supply is so far beyond their reach that they make no effort at all.

Begin in a small way, my brethren, and gradually build toward a reasonable objective. Save a little money regularly, and you will be surprised how it accumulates.

Get out of debt and rid yourself of the terrible bondage that debt brings.

We hear much about second mortgages. Now I am told there are third mortgages.

Discipline yourselves in matters of spending, in matters of borrowing, in practices that lead to bankruptcy and the agony that comes therewith.

Exercise moral discipline

Now, finally, my brethren, I wish to return briefly to a matter I have spoken on before and which has been dealt with by Elder Ballard and President Monson in this meeting. I hope that they will not object to my trying to emphasize again what they have said. I refer to the moral discipline of members of the Church.

Too many are being caught in the web of immorality and all of the bitter fruit that flows from it. To the boys who are here tonight—the young men—I wish to say in the strongest language of which I am capable, stay away from moral iniquity. You know what is right and wrong. You cannot use ignorance as an excuse for unacceptable behavior.

How can you possibly think that you can become involved in immoral practices and then go into the mission field as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you suppose that you can be worthy to go to the house of the Lord, there to be married for time and eternity, if you have indulged in such practices?

I beg of you, my dear young friends, to avoid such behavior. It will not be easy. It will require self-discipline. The forces you confront are powerful and inviting. They are the forces of a clever adversary. You need the strength that comes of prayer.

Stay away from the erotic stuff of the Internet. It can only pull you down. It can lead to your destruction.

Never lose sight of the fact that you hold the priesthood of God. When John the Baptist conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, he stated that this priesthood "holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of bap-

tism by immersion for the remission of sins" (D&C 13).

Do you wish for the ministering of angels?

That ministering will bring with it incomparable rewards. Take the high road in your lives, and God will bless you and nurture you and "lead [you] by the hand, and give [you] answer to [your] prayers" (D&C 112:10).

To you mature men I extend the same plea and the same warning. Small beginnings lead to great tragedies. We deal with them constantly. There is so much of heartache, resentment, disillusionment, and divorce among us.

No tolerance for child abuse

May I again mention a matter with which I have dealt at length in the past. I speak of the evil and despicable sin of child abuse.

We cannot tolerate it. We will not tolerate it. Anyone who abuses a child may expect Church discipline as well as possible legal action.

Child abuse is an affront toward God. Jesus spoke of the beauty and innocence of children. To anyone who has an inclination that could lead to the abuse of children, I say in the strongest language of

which I am capable, discipline yourself. Seek help before you do injury to a child and bring ruin upon yourself.

Priesthood is a great force for good

You men who hold this precious priesthood, bind it to your very souls. Be worthy of it at all times and in all circumstances.

If you do so, you will enjoy that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

May God bless you, my dear brethren of the priesthood, young and old. Fathers, set an example for your children. Boys, look to your fathers for wisdom and guidance and understanding.

How great are the promises of the Lord to those who walk in faith. I leave with you my blessing, my love, and my testimony. What a great and marvelous force for good is in this priesthood if we are united and move forward as one. May the Lord bless us to do so, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "We'll Bring the World His Truth."

Elder Donald L. Hallstrom offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 6, 2002. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist. The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel" to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Redeemer of Israel" and will now favor us with "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling." At the conclusion of the sing-

ing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Earl M. Monson of the Seventy. The choir will then sing "Beautiful Zion, Built Above," and President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling."

Elder Earl M. Monson offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Beautiful Zion, Built Above."

President Thomas S. Monson

John the Baptist's example of humility

Many years ago I marveled at the cover of one of our Church publications, which featured a magnificent reproduction of a Carl Bloch painting. The scene which the artist captured in his mind and then—with a touch of the Master's hand—transferred to canvas depicted Elisabeth, wife of Zacharias, welcoming Mary, the mother of Jesus. Both were to bear sons—miracle births.

The son born of Elisabeth became known as John the Baptist. As with Jesus, son of Mary, so with John—precious little is recorded of their years of youth. A single sentence tells us all that we know of John's life from his birth to his public ministry: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel."¹

John's message was brief. He preached faith, repentance, baptism by immersion, and the bestowal of the Holy Ghost by an authority greater than that possessed by himself. "I am not the Christ," he told his

faithful disciples, "but . . . I am sent before him."² "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh . . . : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."³

Then occurred the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist. Later Jesus testified, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."⁴

All of us living in the world today need points of reference, even models to follow. John the Baptist provides for us a flawless example of unfeigned humility, as he deferred always to the One who was to follow—the Savior of mankind.

As we learn of others who trusted God and followed His teachings, the Spirit whispers to our souls, "Be still, and know that I am God."⁵ As they resolutely kept His commandments and trusted in Him, they were blessed. When we follow their examples, we too will be similarly blessed in our day and in our time. Each one becomes a model to follow.

Abraham's example of obedience

All of us love the beautiful account from the Holy Bible of Abraham and Isaac. How exceedingly difficult it must have been for Abraham, in obedience to God's command, to take his beloved Isaac into the land of Moriah, there to present him as a burnt offering. Can you imagine the heaviness of his heart as he gathered the wood for the fire and journeyed to the appointed place? Surely pain must have racked his body and tortured his mind as he "bound Isaac . . . and laid him on the altar upon the wood [and] stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." How glorious was the pronouncement, and with what wondered welcome did it come: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."⁶

Abraham qualifies as a model of unquestioning obedience.

Job's example of patience

If any of us feels his challenges are beyond his capacity to meet them, let him or her read of Job. By so doing, there comes the feeling, "If Job could endure and overcome, so will I."

Job was a "perfect and upright" man who "feared God, and eschewed evil."⁷ Pious in his conduct, prosperous in his fortune, Job was to face a test which could have destroyed anyone. Shorn of his possessions, scorned by his friends, afflicted by his suffering, shattered by the loss of his family, he was urged to "curse God, and die."⁸ He resisted this temptation and declared from the depths of his noble soul, "Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high."⁹ "I know that my redeemer liveth."¹⁰

Job became a model of unlimited patience. To this day we refer to those who are long-suffering as having the patience

of Job. He provides an example for us to follow.

Noah's example of obedience

"A just man and perfect in his generations," one who "walked with God,"¹¹ was the prophet Noah. Ordained to the priesthood at an early age, "he became a preacher of righteousness and declared the gospel of Jesus Christ, . . . teaching faith, repentance, baptism, and the reception of the Holy Ghost."¹² He warned that failure to heed his message would bring floods upon those who heard his voice, and yet they hearkened not to his words.

Noah heeded God's command to build an ark, that he and his family might be spared destruction. He followed God's instructions to gather into the ark two of every living creature, that they also might be saved from the floodwaters.

Said President Spencer W. Kimball: "As yet there was no evidence of rain and flood. . . . [Noah's] warnings were considered irrational. . . . How foolish to build an ark on dry ground with the sun shining and life moving forward as usual! But time ran out. . . . The floods came. The disobedient . . . were drowned. The miracle of the ark followed the faith manifested in its building."¹³

Noah had the unwavering faith to follow God's commandments. May we ever do likewise. May we remember that the wisdom of God oftentimes appears as foolishness to men, but the greatest lesson we can learn in mortality is that when God speaks and we obey, we will always be right.

Ruth's example of loyalty

A model of ideal womanhood is Ruth. Sensing the grief-stricken heart of her mother-in-law Naomi—who suffered the loss of each of her two fine sons—feeling perhaps the pangs of despair and loneliness that plagued the very soul of Naomi,

Ruth uttered what has become that classic statement of loyalty: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."¹⁴ Ruth's actions demonstrated the sincerity of her words.

Through Ruth's undeviating loyalty to Naomi, she was to marry Boaz, by which she—the foreigner and Moabite convert—became a great-grandmother of David and, therefore, an ancestor of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Nephi's example of determination

I now turn to a mighty Book of Mormon prophet—even Nephi, son of Lehi and Sariah. He was faithful and obedient to God, courageous and bold. When given the difficult assignment to obtain the plates of brass from Laban, he did not murmur but declared, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."¹⁵ Perhaps this act of courage prompted a verse of counsel for us found in the hymn "The Iron Rod":

To Nephi, seer of olden time,
A vision came from God. . . .
Hold to the rod, the iron rod;
'Tis strong, and bright, and true.
The iron rod is the word of God;
'Twill safely guide us through.¹⁶

Nephi personified unflagging determination.

Joseph Smith's example of courage

No description of models to follow would be complete without including Joseph Smith, the first prophet of this dispensation. When but 14 years of age, this courageous young man entered a grove

of trees, which later would be called sacred, and received an answer to his sincere prayer.

There followed for Joseph unrelenting persecution as he related to others the account of the glorious vision he received in that grove. Yet, although he was ridiculed and scorned, he stood firm. Said he, "I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it."¹⁷

Step by step, facing opposition at nearly every turn and yet always guided by the hand of the Lord, Joseph organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He proved courageous in all that he did.

Toward the end of his life, as he was led away with his brother Hyrum to Carthage Jail, he bravely faced what he undoubtedly knew lay ahead for him, and he sealed his testimony with his blood.

As we face life's tests, may we ever emulate that undaunted courage epitomized by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

President Hinckley's example

There stands before us today another prophet of God—even our beloved President Gordon B. Hinckley. He has presided over the largest expansion of the Church—both numerically and geographically—in our history. He has traversed frontiers not heretofore crossed and has visited with government leaders and with members the world over. His love for the people transcends the barriers of language and culture.

With prophetic vision he instituted the Perpetual Education Fund, which breaks the cycle of poverty for our members in many areas of the world and provides skills and training which qualify young men and young women for gainful employment. This inspired plan has kindled the light of hope in the eyes of those who felt doomed to mediocrity but who now have an opportunity for a brighter future.

President Hinckley has labored unceasingly to bring sacred blessings to members of the Church worldwide by providing temples that are within the reach of all. He has the capacity to lift to a higher plane those from all walks of life, regardless of the faith to which they ascribe. He is a model of unfailing optimism, and we revere him as prophet, seer, and revelator.

An example of faithfulness through trials

The unique qualities possessed by these men and women whom I have mentioned can be of invaluable assistance to us as we face the problems and the trials which lie ahead. May I illustrate by mentioning the experience of the Jerome Kenneth Pollard family of Oakland, California.

This past May, as Elder Taavili Joseph Samuel Pollard was traveling to the mission office on the last day of his mission in Zimbabwe, the mission car he was driving somehow spun out of control and hit a tree. A passerby was able to rescue Elder Pollard's companion, but Elder Pollard, who was unconscious, was trapped in the car, which burst into flames. Elder Pollard perished. His mother had passed away eight years earlier; hence, his father was rearing the family alone. A brother was serving in the West Indies Mission.

When the news of Elder Pollard's death reached his father, this humble man—who had already lost his wife—called the son serving in the West Indies Mission to let him know of his brother's death. Over that long-distance telephone line, Brother Pollard and his son, no doubt grief stricken and heartsick, sang together "I Am a Child of God."¹⁸ Before concluding the call, the father offered a prayer to Heavenly Father, thanking Him for His blessings and seeking His divine comfort.

Brother Pollard later commented that he knew his family would be all right, for they have strong testimonies of the gospel and of the plan of salvation.

Remember the examples of these models

My brothers and sisters, in this marvelous dispensation of the fulness of times, as we journey through mortality and face the trials and challenges of the future, may we remember the examples of these models to follow which I have referred to this morning. May we have the unfeigned humility of John the Baptist, the unquestioning obedience of Abraham, the unlimited patience of Job, the unwavering faith of Noah, the undeviating loyalty of Ruth, the unflagging determination of Nephi, the undaunted courage of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the unfailing optimism of President Hinckley. Such will be as a fortress of strength to us throughout our lives.

Follow Jesus, our supreme Example

May we ever be guided by the supreme Exemplar, even the son of Mary, the Savior Jesus Christ—whose very life provided a perfect model for us to follow.

Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as a mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. During His earthly ministry, He taught men the higher law. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick; He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life.

What was the reaction to His message of mercy, His words of wisdom, His lessons of life? There were a precious few who appreciated Him. They bathed His feet. They learned His word. They followed His example.

Then there were those who denied Him. When asked by Pilate, "What shall I do . . . with Jesus which is called Christ?"¹⁹ they cried, "Crucify him."²⁰ They mocked Him. They gave Him vinegar to drink. They reviled Him. They smote Him with a reed. They did spit upon Him. They crucified Him.

Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter and Andrew by the shores of the beautiful Sea of Galilee, He said, "Follow me."²¹ To Philip of old came the call, "Follow me."²² To the Levite who sat at receipt of customs came the instruction, "Follow me."²³ And to you and to me, if we but listen, will come that same beckoning invitation, "Follow me."

My prayer today is that we shall do so. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 1:80.
2. John 3:28.
3. Luke 3:16.
4. Matthew 11:11.
5. Psalm 46:10.
6. Genesis 22:9–10, 12.
7. Job 1:1.
8. Job 2:9.
9. Job 16:19.
10. Job 19:25.
11. Genesis 6:9.
12. Bible Dictionary, "Noah," 738–39.
13. In Conference Report, Oct. 1952, 48.

14. Ruth 1:16.
15. 1 Nephi 3:7.
16. *Hymns*, no. 274.
17. Joseph Smith—History 1:25.
18. *Hymns*, no. 301.
19. Matthew 27:22.
20. Mark 15:13.
21. Matthew 4:19.
22. John 1:43.
23. Luke 5:27.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson. Our next speaker will be Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "Now Let Us Rejoice."

At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, released yesterday as the Young Women general president, will speak to us. She will followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the choir will then sing "How Firm a Foundation."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

I'll go where you want me to go

My text comes from a hymn that has inspired faithful servants of the Lord for many generations:

It may not be on the mountain height
Or over the stormy sea,
It may not be at the battle's front
My Lord will have need of me.
But if, by a still, small voice he calls
To paths that I do not know,
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand
in thine:

I'll go where you want me to go.
["I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go,"
Hymns, no. 270]

Penned by a poetess who was not a Latter-day Saint, these words express the commitment of the faithful children of God in all ages.

Abraham, who led Isaac on that heart-breaking journey to Mount Moriah, was faithfully going where the Lord wanted him to go (see Genesis 22). So was David when he stepped out before the hosts of Israel to answer the challenge of the giant Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17). Esther, inspired to save her people, walked a life-threatening path to challenge the king in his inner court (see Esther 4–5). "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord" was the motivation for Lehi to leave Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 2) and for his son Nephi to return for

the precious records (see 1 Nephi 3–4). Hundreds of other scriptural examples can be cited.

All of these faithful souls showed their obedience to the Lord's direction and their faith in His power and goodness. As Nephi explained, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7).

Example of President J. Reuben Clark

All about us, and in our memories of earlier times, we have inspiring examples of the submissive, faithful service of Latter-day Saints. One of the best known was that of President J. Reuben Clark. After he had served over 16 years as an extraordinarily influential first counselor, the First Presidency was reorganized and he was called as second counselor. Offering an example of humility and willingness to serve that has influenced generations, he said to the Church:

"In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 154).

Service of faithful senior missionaries

Just as significant, though less visible, are the millions of members now laboring with similar faith and devotion in the remote corners of the Lord's vineyard. Our faithful senior missionaries provide the best examples I know.

I recently reviewed the missionary papers of over 50 senior couples. All had already served at least three missions when they submitted their papers for another call. Their homes were everywhere from Australia to Arizona, California to Missouri. Their ages ranged from the 60s and

early 70s to the—well, never mind. One couple, who were offering themselves for a seventh mission, had already served on Temple Square, in Alaska, in New Zealand, in Kenya, and in Ghana. They were sent to the Philippines. Scores of similar examples could be cited.

The priesthood leaders' comments on the papers of these couples are testimonies of service and sacrifice. I quote several:

"Willing to go anyplace, do anything for whatever length of time required."

"[These] are great examples of Church members who dedicate their lives to the Lord."

"Will go where the Lord wants [us] to go," another couple noted. "We pray we will be sent where we are needed."

Priesthood leader comments on the qualifications of these couples provide a good summary of the work our senior missionaries do so effectively.

"He is great in getting programs running and [in] leadership."

"Their joy is fullest when they are asked to 'build' and develop; therefore an assignment in a developing area of the Church may be appropriate. Willing to serve in whatever capacity called."

"They will likely be of more value working with [less-actives] and converts rather than in offices."

"They love the youth and have a gift with them."

"They feel most effective in and have a fondness for leadership support and fellowshiping work."

"They have slowed down some physically, but not in spiritual matters or missionary zeal."

"He is a true missionary. His first name is Nephi, and he follows his namesake. She is a tremendous lady, has always been a great example. Will do great wherever called. This is their fifth mission." (They had previously served in Guam, Nigeria, Vietnam, Pakistan, Singapore, and Malaysia. Giving them some respite from those arduous paths, the Lord's servants

called that couple to serve in the Nauvoo Temple.)

Another couple spoke for all these heroes and heroines when they wrote: "Will go anywhere and do what is asked. It is not a sacrifice; it is a privilege."

These senior missionaries offer a special measure of sacrifice and commitment. So do our mission presidents and temple presidents and their loyal companions. All leave their homes and families to serve full-time for a season. The same is true of the army of young missionaries, who put their lives at home on hold and bid good-bye to family and friends and set forth (usually at their own expense) to serve wherever they are assigned by the Lord, speaking through His servants.

I'll go where you want me to go,
dear Lord,
Over mountain or plain or sea;
I'll say what you want me to say,
dear Lord;
I'll be what you want me to be.
[Hymns, no. 270]

A tradition of unselfish service

Millions of others serve from their homes on a Church-service basis. So it is with the 26,000 bishoprics and branch presidencies and the faithful presidencies of the quorums and Relief Society, Primary, and Young Women who serve with them and under their direction. So it is with millions of others—faithful teachers in wards, branches, stakes, and districts. And think of the hundreds of thousands of home teachers and visiting teachers who fulfill the Lord's command to "watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them" (D&C 20:53). All of these can join in this inspired verse:

Perhaps today there are loving words
Which Jesus would have me speak;
There may be now in the paths of sin
Some wand'rer whom I should seek.

O Savior, if thou wilt be my guide,
Tho dark and rugged the way,
My voice shall echo the message sweet:
I'll say what you want me to say.
[Hymns, no. 270]

As the prophet-king Benjamin taught, "When [we] are in the service of [our] fellow beings [we] are only in the service of [our] God" (Mosiah 2:17). He also cautioned us to "see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27).

The gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to become converted. It teaches us what we should do, and it provides us opportunities to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. The full measure of this conversion to men and women of God happens best through our labors in His vineyard.

We have a great tradition of unselfish service in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Indeed, one of the distinguishing characteristics of this Church is the fact that we have no paid or professional clergy in our thousands of local congregations and in the regional stakes, districts, and missions that oversee them. As an essential part of God's plan for His children, the leadership and work of His Church is provided by His children who give their time freely for the service of God and their fellowmen. They obey the Lord's command to love Him and to serve Him (see John 14:15; D&C 20:19; 42:29; 59:5). This is the way men and women prepare for the ultimate blessing of eternal life.

Room for improvement in our service

Still, there is room for improvement in the commitment of some. When I ask stake presidents for suggestions on subjects I should treat at stake conferences, I often hear about members who refuse Church callings or accept callings and fail to fulfill their responsibilities. Some are not com-

mitted and faithful. It has always been so. But this is not without consequence.

The Savior spoke of the contrast between the faithful and the unfaithful in three great parables recorded in the 25th chapter of Matthew. Half of the invited guests were excluded from the wedding feast because they were unprepared when the bridegroom came (see Matthew 25:1–13). The unprofitable servants who failed to employ the talents they were given by the Master were not allowed to enter into the joy of the Lord (see Matthew 25:14–30). And when the Lord came in His glory, He separated the sheep, who had served Him and their fellowmen, from the goats, who had not. Only those who had “done it unto one of the least of these my brethren” (Matthew 25:40) were set on His right hand to inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world (see Matthew 25:31–46).

My brothers and sisters, if you are delinquent in commitment, please consider who it is you are refusing or neglecting to serve when you decline a calling or when you accept, promise, and fail to fulfill. I pray that each of us will follow this inspired declaration:

There’s surely somewhere a lowly place
In earth’s harvest fields so wide
Where I may labor through life’s
short day
For Jesus, the Crucified.
[Hymns, no. 270]

Jesus’ example

Jesus showed the way. Even though He shrank from the bitter path that led through Gethsemane and Calvary (see D&C 19:18), He submissively said to the Father, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Earlier He taught:

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24–26).

The purpose of our service

We need to remember the purpose of our service to one another. If it were only to accomplish some part of His work, God could dispatch “legions of angels,” as Jesus taught on another occasion (see Matthew 26:53). But that would not achieve the purpose of the service He has prescribed. We serve God and our fellowmen in order to become the kind of children who can return to live with our heavenly parents.

So trusting my all to thy tender care,
And knowing thou lovest me,
I’ll do thy will with a heart sincere:
I’ll be what you want me to be.
[Hymns, no. 270]

Service brings a change of heart

Almost a decade ago I read a letter from a returned missionary who described this process in his life. He had written to thank those who direct missionary work “for daring to send me where the Lord required rather than where I had deemed appropriate.” He had come, he said, “from a background of proud, competitive intellectualism.” Before his mission he was a student at a prestigious university in the eastern United States. Quote:

“I guess out of a sense of obligation and inertia, I filled out my [missionary] papers and sent them in, extremely careful to mark the column indicating greatest desire to serve abroad and in a foreign language. I was careful to make it apparent that I was an accomplished student of Russian and fully capable of spending two

years among the Russian people. Confident that no committee could resist such qualifications, I rested confident that I would enjoy a wonderfully mind-expanding cultural adventure."

He was shocked to receive a call to serve in a mission in the United States. He didn't know anything about the state where he would serve, except that it was in his own country speaking English rather than abroad speaking the language he had learned, and, as he said, "The people I would work with would likely be academic incompetents." He continued, "I almost refused to accept the call, feeling that I would be more fulfilled by enlisting in the Peace Corps or something else."

Fortunately this proud young man found the courage and faith to accept the call and to follow the direction and counsel of his fine mission president. Then the miracle of spiritual growth began. He described it thus:

"As I began to serve among the uneducated people of [this state], I struggled mightily for several months, but gradually the sweet workings of the Spirit began to tear down the walls of pride and disbelief that had wrapped themselves so tightly around my soul. The miracle of a conversion to Christ began. The sense of the reality of God and the eternal brotherhood

of all men came more and more powerfully to my troubled mind."

It was not easy, he admitted, but with the influence of his great mission president and with his growing love for the people he served, it was possible, and it occurred.

"My desire to love and serve these people who in the ultimate scale were at least my peers, almost definitely my superiors, waxed stronger and stronger. I learned humility for the first time in my life; I learned what it means to make our valuations of others [without relying on the] irrelevant details of life. I began to feel swelling within my heart a love of the spirits that came here to earth with me" (letter to General Authorities, Feb. 1994).

Such is the miracle of service. As the poetess wrote:

But if, by a still, small voice he calls
To paths that I do not know,
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand
in thine:
I'll go where you want me to go.
[*Hymns*, no. 270]

I testify of Jesus Christ, who beckons us to His path and His service, and pray that we will have the faith and commitment to follow and the power to be what He wants us to be, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

That they may be one in us

As His mortal ministry drew to a close, knowing "that his hour was come" (John 13:1), Jesus gathered His Apostles in an upper room in Jerusalem. Following their supper and after He had washed their feet and taught them, Jesus offered a sublime Intercessory Prayer on behalf of these Apostles and all who would be-

lieve in Him. He supplicated the Father in these words:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:20–23).

Become one within ourselves

How glorious it is to contemplate that we have been invited into that perfect unity that exists with the Father and the Son. How can this happen?

Pondering this question, it becomes clear that we must begin by becoming one within ourselves. We are dual beings of flesh and spirit, and we sometimes feel out of harmony or in conflict. Our spirit is enlightened by conscience, the Light of Christ (see Moroni 7:16; D&C 93:2), and naturally responds to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit and desires to follow truth. But the appetites and temptations to which the flesh is subject can, if permitted, overwhelm and dominate the spirit. Paul said:

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:21–23).

Nephi expressed similar feelings:

"Notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.

"I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me" (2 Nephi 4:17–18).

But then, remembering the Savior, Nephi stated this hopeful conclusion: "Nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted" (2 Nephi 4:19). What did he mean?

Look to Jesus to restore unity of soul

Jesus was also a being of flesh and spirit, but He yielded not to temptation (see Mosiah 15:5). We can turn to Him as we seek unity and peace within because He understands. He understands the struggle, and He also understands how to win the struggle. As Paul said, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Most important, we may look to Jesus to help restore the inner unity of our soul when we have succumbed to sin and destroyed our peace. Soon after His intercessory plea that we might become "perfect in one" (John 17:23), Jesus suffered and gave His life to atone for sin. The power of His Atonement can erase the effects of sin in us. When we repent, His atoning grace justifies and cleanses us (see 3 Nephi 27:16–20). It is as if we had not succumbed, as if we had not yielded to temptation.

As we endeavor day by day and week by week to follow the path of Christ, our spirit asserts its preeminence, the battle within subsides, and temptations cease to trouble. There is greater and greater harmony between the spiritual and physical until our physical bodies are transformed, in Paul's words, from "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin" to "instruments of righteousness unto God" (see Romans 6:13).

Submit, like Jesus, to the Father's will

Becoming at one within ourselves prepares us for the greater blessing of becoming one with God and Christ.

Jesus achieved perfect unity with the Father by submitting Himself, both flesh and spirit, to the will of the Father. The Savior's ministry was always clearly focused because there was no debilitating or distracting double-mindedness in Him. Referring to His Father, Jesus said, "I do

always those things that please him" (John 8:29).

Because it was the Father's will, Jesus submitted even to death, "the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7).

This was certainly no small thing. That suffering, He said, "caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:18–19).

These statements reveal that the Savior's overarching ambition is to glorify the Father. The Father is "in" the Son in the sense that the Father's glory and the Father's will are the all-consuming occupation of the Son.

During that Last Supper with His Apostles, the Savior said:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:1–2).

What form that purging may take, what sacrifices it may entail, we probably cannot know in advance. But if with the rich young ruler we were to ask, "What lack I yet?" (Matthew 19:20), the Savior's answer would be the same: "Come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21); be my disciple as I am the disciple of the Father; become "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [you], even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19).

Make God's will our greatest desire

President Brigham Young spoke understandingly of our challenge when he said:

"After all that has been said and done, after he has led this people so long, do you not perceive that there is a lack of confidence in our God? Can you perceive it in yourselves? You may ask, '[Brother] Brigham, do you perceive it in yourself?' I do, I can see that I yet lack confidence, to some extent, in him whom I trust.—Why? Because I have not the power, in consequence of that which the fall has brought upon me. . . .

" . . . Something rises up within me, at times[,] that . . . draws a dividing line between my interest and the interest of my Father in heaven; something that makes my interest and the interest of my Father in heaven not precisely one.

" . . . We should feel and understand, as far as possible, as far as fallen nature will let us, as far as we can get faith and knowledge to understand ourselves, that the interest of that God whom we serve is our interest, and that we have no other, neither in time nor in eternity" (*Deseret News*, 10 Sept. 1856, 212).

Surely we will not be one with God and Christ until we make Their will and interest our greatest desire. Such submissiveness is not reached in a day, but through the Holy Spirit, the Lord will tutor us if we are willing until, in process of time, it may accurately be said that He is in us as the Father is in Him. At times I tremble to consider what may be required, but I know that it is only in this perfect union that a fulness of joy can be found. I am grateful beyond expression that I am invited to be one with those holy beings I revere and worship as my Heavenly Father and Redeemer.

May God hear the Savior's prayer and lead us all to be one with Them in my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang
 "Now Let Us Rejoice."

Sister Margaret D. Nadauld

A powerful influence for good

I love the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church, which has been restored to the earth in our day. I treasure the teachings of His holy life from newborn infant to resurrected man, Son of God.

As I have read from the pages of the Bible, in my mind's eye I have watched Him as He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."¹ In my reading, I was there when He raised the dead. He healed the sick, fed the 5,000, brought comfort and hope and a process for peace into the world that He had created. He forgave those who mocked and tortured and crucified Him—for they knew not what they did. I saw the divine love and concern He had for His mother, though He suffered in supreme agony Himself. He overcame death so that we can too. He has prepared a place for us in heaven with our Eternal Father. He has taught us the plan for happiness and given us the vision of it and the hope to follow it. His was the ultimate life of sacrifice and a life of service to fulfill the plan of God His Father.

A Latter-day Saint woman who follows Christ's example in her daily living begins to fulfill the plan of our Heavenly Father for her. By so doing she can be a powerful influence for good in today's world and meet the challenges of mortality. I have known such women, and they have been a guiding light to me. The Latter-day Saint woman who follows Christ is a true Christian in the very best sense of the word. She is a woman of faith who trusts God and is confident and fearless.

Women of faith

A woman of faith trusts God and faces adversity with hope. She knows of His interest in her life. She knows that He knows her. She loves His words and drinks deeply of that living water. She is grateful for the

prophet He has sent for these latter days, and she trusts his counsel and follows it, for she knows that by so doing she will find safety and peace. In prayer she seeks the kind, unfaltering guidance and help of a listening Heavenly Father. As she prays, she listens—allowing the communication to be two-way. She trusts that in His still and quiet way, He will lead her by the hand and give her answer to her prayers.²

A woman of faith is confident because she understands the divine plan of our Heavenly Father and her role to bless lives. She is confident that any sacrifice she makes is worth something in an eternal sense. She knows about sacrifice from knowing of the life of the Savior. She knows that her sacrifices may be small by comparison, but she knows that Heavenly Father understands and values what she does to strengthen her home and her family and the world in which she lives. Her confidence grows because she is virtuous and lovely and gracious, which is even better than beautiful. She has pure motives. She is loving and gentle and kind. The hearts of her husband and her children safely trust in her.³ And so do the children or youth or women that she has been called to teach, lead, serve, and love—they are drawn to her because of that special spirit that she radiates. It is the image of God that she has in her countenance that is appealing and important.⁴ She is confident that she is fashioning a character and a record of performance that will be invited to stand in the presence of her Heavenly Father. She will be able to do so with the sense that she fully belongs there, that she is known by Him and loved and valued and treasured forever and always.

A woman of faith is fearless. She fears no evil, for God is with her.⁵ There is no ambiguity, no uncertain trump in her life. She can live a principled life because she studies the doctrine and teachings of a

perfect teacher, the Master. She is a noble example to all who know her. She is less than perfect, of course, not because she doesn't have perfect principles or the perfect example in Christ, but because she is human. She stays away from the evil influence and the unclean thing, and if it encroaches on her territory, she is as a lioness protecting her cubs. A fearless woman of faith has the courage to talk with her children about practices which would destroy them. They not only hear her discuss her commitment, but they see her commitment in her daily living—in the way she dresses, what she reads and watches, how she spends her leisure time, what she loves and laughs at, who she attracts, and how she acts at all times, in all things, and in all places. She has a certain style of her own that is attractive and joyful and bright and good. Our little girls and our young women can safely trust in her example. We pray that they too will be fearless as they seek out and promote that which is uplifting and happy and decent, for they are our future.

Gratitude for women of faith

Thank heaven for women of faith in our lives. A woman of faith loves the Lord. She wants Him to know it by the life she lives, by the words she speaks, by the service she renders to His children, by her every action. She knows that He loves her even though she is imperfect and still trying to be better. She knows that when she does her very best, it is enough, as President Hinckley has told us.⁶

A woman of faith is blessed by faithful men in her life who hold the priesthood of God and honor this privilege: her father, bishop, husband, brothers, sons. They value her and the divine gifts given by God to His daughter. They sustain and encourage, and they understand the great mission of her life as a woman. They love her; they bless her. They are in turn blessed by this woman of faith as they walk the path of life together. They know, as scripture teaches, that "two are better than one. . . . For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow."⁷

I express my gratitude for wonderful women of faith, for great, noble men, and for my beloved family, who have lifted me up and inspired me throughout my life. They have been an especially great blessing as I have tried to fulfill the sacred errand from the Lord as the Young Women general president.

Dear brothers and sisters, please know of my love for you and my great gratitude to our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I will honor and serve Them with all my heart forever and be thankful for the privilege. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 2:52.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.
3. See Proverbs 31:11.
4. See Alma 5:14.
5. See Psalm 23:4.
6. See Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 69.
7. Ecclesiastes 4:9–10.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Counsel to those who are called to serve

Not long ago a young man I did not know approached me in a crowded place.

He said quietly but with great intensity, "Elder Eyring, I have just been called as the president of my elders quorum. What advice do you have for me?" I was sure

that what he needed to know and to feel I couldn't give him there, with the people rushing past us. And so I said, "I will give you my counsel in general conference."

That young man is not alone in wanting help. Thousands of members of the Church across the earth are called every week to serve, many of them recent converts. The variety in their callings is great, and the variety of their previous Church experience is even greater. If you are the one who calls them, or trains them, or simply cares about them, as we all do, there are some things to know about how to help them succeed.

You may think first of being sure that they get a handbook, lesson manuals, or the records they are to keep. You might even give them a list of the times and the places of the meetings they are to attend. Then you might be about to tell them how their work will be evaluated, when you will notice concern in their eyes.

You see, even the newest member of the Church can sense that a call to service should be primarily a matter of the heart. It is by giving our whole hearts to the Master and keeping His commandments that we come to know Him. In time, through the power of the Atonement, our hearts are changed, and we can become like Him. So there is a better way to help those who are called than descriptions of what they are to do.

What they will need, even more than to be trained in their duties, is to see with spiritual eyes what it means to be called to serve in the restored Church of Jesus Christ. This is the kingdom of God on the earth. Because of that, it has a power beyond any other endeavor in which humans can engage. That power depends on the faith of those called to serve in it.

And so, to everyone, man or woman, girl or boy, who has been called or who will yet be, I give you my counsel. There are a few things you must come to know are true. I will try to put them in words. Only

the Lord through the Holy Ghost can put them deep in your heart. Here they are:

You are called of God

First, you are called of God. The Lord knows you. He knows whom He would have serve in every position in His Church. He chose you. He has prepared a way so He could issue your call. He restored the keys of the priesthood to Joseph Smith. Those keys have been passed down in an unbroken line to President Hinckley. Through those keys, other priesthood servants were given keys to preside in stakes and wards, in districts and branches. It was through those keys that the Lord called you. Those keys confer a right to revelation. And revelation comes in answer to prayer. The person who was inspired to recommend you for this call didn't do it because they liked you or because they needed someone to do a particular task. They prayed and felt an answer that you were the one to be called.

The person who called you did not issue the call simply because he learned by interviewing you that you were worthy and willing to serve. He prayed to know the Lord's will for you. It was prayer and revelation to those authorized of the Lord which brought you here. Your call is an example of a source of power unique to the Lord's Church. Men and women are called of God by prophecy and by the laying on of hands by those God has authorized.

You represent the Savior

You are called to represent the Savior. Your voice to testify becomes the same as His voice, your hands to lift the same as His hands. His work is to bless His Father's spirit children with the opportunity to choose eternal life. So, your calling is to bless lives. That will be true even in the most ordinary tasks you are assigned and in moments when you might be doing

something not apparently connected to your call. Just the way you smile or the way you offer to help someone can build their faith. And should you forget who you are, just the way you speak and the way you behave can destroy faith.

Your call has eternal consequences

Your call has eternal consequences for others and for you. In the world to come, thousands may call your name blessed, even more than the people you serve here. They will be the ancestors and the descendants of those who chose eternal life because of something you said or did, or even what you were. If someone rejects the Savior's invitation because you did not do all you could have done, their sorrow will be yours. You see, there are no small callings to represent the Lord. Your call carries grave responsibility. But you need not fear, because with your call come great promises.

The Lord will guide you by revelation

One of those promises is the second thing you need to know. It is that the Lord will guide you by revelation just as He called you. You must ask in faith for revelation to know what you are to do. With your call comes the promise that answers will come. But that guidance will come only when the Lord is sure you will obey. To know His will you must be committed to do it. The words "Thy will be done," written in the heart, are the window to revelation.

The answer comes by the Holy Spirit. You will need that guidance often. To have the Holy Ghost as your companion, you must be worthy, cleansed by the Atonement of Jesus Christ. So, your obedience to the commandments, your desire to do His will, and your asking in faith will determine how clearly the Master can guide you by answers to your prayers.

Often the answers will come as you study the scriptures. They contain accounts of what the Lord did in His mortal ministry and the guidance He has given His servants. They have doctrine in them which will apply in every time and every situation. Pondering the scriptures will lead you to ask the right questions in prayer. And just as surely as the heavens were opened to Joseph Smith after he pondered the scriptures in faith, God will answer your prayers and He will lead you by the hand.

The Lord will magnify you

There is a third thing that you need to know: just as God called you and will guide you, He will magnify you. You will need that magnification. Your calling will surely bring opposition. You are in the Master's service. You are His representative. Eternal lives depend on you. He faced opposition, and He said that facing opposition would be the lot of those He called. The forces arrayed against you will try not only to frustrate your work but to bring you down. The Apostle Paul described it this way:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world."¹

He will magnify your efforts

There will be times when you will feel overwhelmed. One of the ways you will be attacked is with the feeling that you are inadequate. Well, you are inadequate to answer a call to represent God with only your own powers. But you have access to more than your natural capacities, and you do not work alone.

The Lord will magnify what you say and what you do in the eyes of the people you serve. He will send the Holy Ghost to manifest to them that what you spoke was true. What you say and do will carry hope

and give direction to people far beyond your natural abilities and your own understanding. That miracle has been a mark of the Lord's Church in every dispensation. It is so much a part of your call that you may begin to take it for granted.

The day of your release will teach you a great lesson. On the day I was released as a bishop, one of the ward members came to my home afterwards and said, "I know you are no longer my bishop, but could we talk just one more time? You have always spoken words I needed and given me such good counsel. The new bishop doesn't know me the way you do. Could we just talk one more time?"

Reluctantly I agreed. The member sat down in a chair opposite mine. It seemed to be just as it had been in the hundreds of times I had interviewed members of the ward as a judge in Israel. The conversation began. There came the moment when counsel was needed. I waited for the ideas, the words, and the feelings to flow into my mind, as they always had.

Nothing came. In my heart and mind there was only silence. After a few moments I said, "I'm sorry. I appreciate your kindness and your trust. But I'm afraid I can't help you."

When you are released from your calling, you will learn what I learned then. God magnifies those He calls, even in what may seem to you a small or inconspicuous service. You will have the gift of seeing your service magnified. Give thanks while that gift is yours. You will appreciate its worth more than you can imagine when it is gone.

He will work with you

The Lord will not only magnify the power of your efforts. He will work with you Himself. His voice to four missionaries, called through the Prophet Joseph Smith to a difficult task, gives courage to everyone He calls in His kingdom:

"And I myself will go with them and be in their midst; and I am their advocate with the Father, and nothing shall prevail against them."²

Because the Savior is a resurrected and glorified being, He is not physically with every one of His servants at every moment. But He is perfectly aware of them and their circumstance and able to intervene with His power. That is why He can promise you:

"Whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."³

He will multiply your energy and power

There is yet another way the Lord will magnify you in your call to His service. You will feel at some time, perhaps at many times, that you cannot do all that you feel you must. The heavy weight of your responsibilities will seem too great. You will worry that you can't spend more time with your family. You will wonder how you can find the time and the energy to meet your responsibilities beyond your family and your calling. You may feel discouragement and even guilt after you have done all you could to meet all your obligations.

I have had such days and such nights. Let me tell you what I have learned. It is this: if I only think of my own performance, my sadness deepens. But when I remember that the Lord promised that His power would go with me, I begin to look for evidence of what He has done in the lives of the people I am to serve. I pray to see with spiritual eyes the effects of His power.

Then, invariably, the faces of people flood back into my memory. I remember the shine in the eyes of my child whose heart was softened, the tears of happiness on the face of a girl on the back row of a Sunday School class I was teaching, or a

problem that was resolved before I had time to get to it. I know then that I have done enough for the promise made by Joseph Smith to be fulfilled once again:

"Let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed."⁴

You can have the utmost assurance that your power will be multiplied many times by the Lord. All He asks is that you give your best effort and your whole heart. Do it cheerfully and with the prayer of faith. The Father and His Beloved Son will send the Holy Ghost as your companion to guide you. Your efforts will be magnified in the lives of the people you serve. And when you look back on what may now seem trying times of service and sacrifice, the sacrifice will have become a blessing, and you will know that you have seen the arm of God lifting those you served for Him, and lifting you.

I know that God the Father lives. He hears and answers our prayers. Those we serve are His spirit children. This is the true Church of Jesus Christ. His is the only name through which our Father's children may be sanctified and gain eternal life.

The keys of the priesthood are exercised by the Lord's living prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley.

I testify that the Savior lives and leads His living Church. I know that. I am a witness for Him and of Him. He sees and appreciates your faithful service in the work to which He called you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Ephesians 6:12.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 32:3.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.

The choir sang "How Firm a Foundation."

President Hinckley

We express appreciation to the choir for their beautiful music. Following my remarks, they will sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, I seek the inspiration of the Lord in addressing you. I never get over the tremendous responsibility of speaking to the Latter-day Saints. I am grateful for your kindness and for your forbearance. I constantly pray that I may be worthy of the confidence of the people.

A wearisome but wonderful journey

I have recently come from a very long journey. It has been wearisome, but it

has been wonderful to be out among the Saints. If it were possible, I would turn all of the day-to-day administrative matters of the Church over to others, and then I would spend my time out among our people, visiting those in small branches as well as those in large stakes. I would wish to gather with the Saints wherever they may be. I feel that every member of this Church is deserving of a visit. I regret that because of physical limitations I can no longer shake hands with everybody. But I can look them in the eye with gladness in

my heart and express my love and leave a blessing.

Rededication of the Freiberg Germany Temple

The occasion for this most recent journey was the rededication of the Freiberg Germany Temple and the dedication of The Hague Netherlands Temple. It was my opportunity to dedicate the Freiberg Temple 17 years ago. It was a rather modest building constructed in what was then the German Democratic Republic, the east zone of a divided Germany. Its construction was literally a miracle. President Monson, Hans Ringger, and others had won the goodwill of East German government officials who consented to it.

It has served marvelously well through these years. Now the infamous wall is gone. It is easier for our people to travel to Freiberg. The building was worn after these years and had become inadequate.

The temple has been enlarged and made much more beautiful and serviceable. We held just one session of dedication. Saints gathered from a vast area. In the large room where we sat, we could look into the faces of many of those rugged and solid and wonderful Latter-day Saints who through all of these years, in sunshine and in shadow, under government-imposed restraint and now in perfect freedom, have kept the faith, served the Lord, and stood like giants. I am so sorry that I could not throw my arms around these heroic brethren and sisters and tell them how much I love them. If they are now hearing me, I hope that they will know of that love and will pardon my hurried departure from their midst.

Dedication of The Hague Netherlands Temple

From there we flew to France to take care of Church business. We then flew to Rotterdam and drove to The Hague. Work in three nations in one day is a rather heavy schedule for an old man.

The following day we dedicated The Hague Netherlands Temple. Four sessions were held. What a touching and wonderful experience that was.

The temple is a beautiful structure in a good area. I am so grateful for the house of the Lord which will accommodate the Saints of the Netherlands, Belgium, and parts of France. Missionaries were first sent to that part of Europe way back in 1861. Thousands have joined the Church. Most of them emigrated to the States. But we have there now a wonderful body of precious and faithful Latter-day Saints who are deserving of a house of the Lord in their midst.

Visits to Ukraine, Russia, and Iceland

I determined that while in that part of the world we would go to other areas. We accordingly flew to Kiev in Ukraine. I was there 21 years ago. There is a new sense of freedom in the air. What an inspiration to meet with more than 3,000 Ukrainian Saints. The people gathered from far and near, enduring great discomfort and expense to get there.

One family could not afford to bring all of its members. The parents remained at home and sent their children so that they might have the opportunity to be with us.

From there we went to Moscow, Russia. I was there 21 years ago also, and there is a change. It is like electricity. You cannot see it. But you can feel it. Here again we had a wonderful meeting, with opportunity to converse with important government officials as we had done in Ukraine.

What a priceless and precious privilege to meet with these wonderful Saints who have been gathered "one of a city, and two of a family" into the fold of Zion in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 3:14). Life is not easy for them. Their burdens are heavy. But their faith is secure, and their testimonies are vibrant.

In these faraway places, strange to most of the Church, the gospel flame burns brightly and lights the way for thousands.

We then flew to Iceland. It is a beautiful place with beautiful people. Here we had a long interview with the president of the nation, a very distinguished and able man who has been to Utah and speaks very generously of our people.

Again we met with the Saints. What an inspiration to look into their faces as they crowded our own meetinghouse in the city of Reykjavik.

The marvelous foundation of our faith

In all these places and in all these opportunities to speak to so many, one thing constantly occupied my mind—the wonder of this work, the absolute wonder of it. The words of our great hymn just sung by the choir repeatedly came to mind:

How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
[“How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85]

Do we as Latter-day Saints really understand and appreciate the strength of our position? Among the religions of the world, it is unique and wonderful.

Is this Church an educational institution? Yes. We are constantly and endlessly teaching, teaching, teaching in a great variety of circumstances. Is it a social organization? Indeed. It is a great family of friends who mingle together and enjoy one another. Is it a mutual aid society? Yes. It has a remarkable program for building self-reliance and granting aid to those in distress. It is all of these and more. But beyond these it is the Church and kingdom of God established and directed by our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the risen Lord Jesus Christ, to bless all who come within its fold.

Significance of the First Vision

We declare without equivocation that God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, appeared in person to the boy Joseph Smith.

When I was interviewed by Mike Wallace on the *60 Minutes* program, he asked me if I actually believed that. I replied, “Yes, sir. That’s the miracle of it.”

Validity of the Church rests on the First Vision

That is the way I feel about it. Our whole strength rests on the validity of that vision. It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most important and wonderful work under the heavens.

Reflect upon it, my brethren and sisters. For centuries the heavens remained sealed. Good men and women, not a few—really great and wonderful people—tried to correct, strengthen, and improve their systems of worship and their body of doctrine. To them I pay honor and respect. How much better the world is because of their bold action. While I believe their work was inspired, it was not favored with the opening of the heavens, with the appearance of Deity.

Then in 1820 came that glorious manifestation in answer to the prayer of a boy who had read in his family Bible the words of James: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

Upon that unique and wonderful experience stands the validity of this Church.

In all of recorded religious history there is nothing to compare with it. The New Testament recounts the baptism of Jesus, when the voice of God was heard and the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove. At the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John saw the Lord transfigured before them. They heard the

voice of the Father, but they did not see Him.

Vision ushered in the greatest dispensation

Why did both the Father and the Son come to a boy, a mere lad? For one thing, they came to usher in the greatest gospel dispensation of all time, when all of previous dispensations should be gathered and brought together in one.

Can anyone doubt that the age in which we live is the most wonderful in the history of the world? There has been a marvelous flowering of science, of medicine, of communication, of transportation unequaled in all the chronicles of mankind. Is it reasonable to submit that there should also be a flowering of spiritual knowledge as a part of this incomparable renaissance of light and understanding?

The instrument in this work of God was a boy whose mind was not cluttered by the philosophies of men. That mind was fresh and without schooling in the traditions of the day.

It is easy to see why people do not accept this account. It is almost beyond comprehension. And yet it is so reasonable. Those familiar with the Old Testament recognize the appearance of Jehovah to the prophets who lived in that comparatively simple time. Can they legitimately deny the need for an appearance of the God of heaven and His resurrected Son in this very complex period of the world's history?

That They came, both of Them, that Joseph saw Them in Their resplendent glory, that They spoke to him, and that he heard and recorded Their words—of these remarkable things we testify.

I knew a so-called intellectual who said the Church was trapped by its history. My response was that without that history we have nothing. The truth of that unique, singular, and remarkable event is the pivotal substance of our faith.

Coming forth of the Book of Mormon

But this glorious vision was but the beginning of a series of manifestations that constitute the early history of this work.

As if that vision were not enough to certify to the personality and the reality of the Redeemer of mankind, there followed the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Here is something that a man could hold in his hands, could "heft," as it were. He could read it. He could pray about it, for it contained a promise that the Holy Ghost would declare its truth if that witness were sought in prayer.

This remarkable book stands as a testimonial to the living reality of the Son of God. The Bible declares, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:16). The Bible, the testament of the Old World, is one witness. The Book of Mormon, the testament of the New World, is another witness.

I cannot understand why the Christian world does not accept this book. I would think they would be looking for anything and everything that would establish without question the reality and the divinity of the Savior of the world.

Restoration of the priesthood and its keys

There followed the restoration of the priesthood—first, of the Aaronic under the hands of John the Baptist, who had baptized Jesus in Jordan.

Then came Peter, James, and John, Apostles of the Lord, who conferred in this age that which they had received under the hands of the Master with whom they walked, even "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," with authority to bind in the heavens that which they bound on earth (Matthew 16:19).

Subsequently came the bestowal of further priesthood keys under the hands of Moses, Elias, and Elijah.

Think of it, my brothers and sisters. Think of the wonder of it. This is the restored Church of Jesus Christ. We as a people are Latter-day Saints. We testify that the heavens have been opened, that the curtains have been parted, that God has spoken, and that Jesus Christ has manifested Himself, followed by a bestowal of divine authority.

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of this work, and it is built upon a "foundation of . . . apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 2:20).

Be tolerant and kind; remember roots

This wondrous Restoration should make of us a people of tolerance, of neighborliness, of appreciation and kindness toward others. We cannot be boastful. We cannot be proud. We can be thankful, as we must be. We can be humble, as we should be.

We love those of other churches. We work with them in good causes. We respect them. But we must never forget our roots. Those roots lie deep in the soil of the opening of this, the final dispensation, the dispensation of the fulness of times.

What an inspiration it has been to look into the faces of men and women across the world who carry in their hearts a solemn conviction of the truth of this foundation.

When it comes to divine authority, this is the sum and substance of the whole matter.

Our great and singular message

God be thanked for His marvelous bestowal of testimony, authority, and doctrine associated with this, the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

This must be our great and singular message to the world. We do not offer it with boasting. We testify in humility but with gravity and absolute sincerity. We invite all, the whole earth, to listen to this account and take measure of its truth. God bless us as those who believe in His divine manifestations and help us to extend the knowledge of these great and marvelous occurrences to all who will listen. To these we say in a spirit of love, bring with you all that you have of good and truth which you have received from whatever source, and come and let us see if we may add to it. This invitation I extend to men and women everywhere with my solemn testimony that this work is true, for I know the truth of it by the power of the Holy Ghost. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 6, 2002. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and

Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 172nd Semiannual General Conference of The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings. The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." After the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder Harold G. Hillam offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Hillam. The choir will now sing "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief." Following the singing, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and he will be followed by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy.

The choir sang "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Shall he find faith on the earth?

That was the most beautiful rendition of a magnificent song, "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief," which was the favorite of the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum. What a beautiful performance from the choir and orchestra.

I pray that I may have the Spirit of the Lord with me that has been with us during our conference, that I may say those things that will be beneficial to members of the Church and those who are not members. I feel very humble in this assignment.

Today I ask a question that the Savior asked nearly 2,000 years ago: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"¹

Faith—the first principle of the gospel

What is true faith? Faith is defined as "belief and trust in and loyalty to God" and "firm belief in something for which there is no proof."² We believe that "faith is to

hope for things which are not seen, but which are true . . . , and must be centered in Jesus Christ." In fact, we believe that "faith in Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel."³

A widow's faith

There are those who can teach us regarding faith if we will but open our hearts and minds. One such person is a woman whose husband had died. Left alone to raise her son, she had tried to find ways of supporting herself, but she lived in a time of terrible famine. Food was scarce, and many were perishing because of hunger.

As available food diminished, so did the woman's chance of surviving. Every day she watched helplessly as her meager supply of food decreased.

Hoping for relief but finding none, the woman finally realized the day had come when she had only enough food for one last meal.

It was then that a stranger approached and asked the unthinkable: "Bring me, I pray thee," he said to her, "a morsel of bread."

The woman turned to the man and said, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse." She told him she was about to prepare it as a last meal for herself and her son, "that we may eat it, and die."

She did not know that the man before her was the prophet Elijah, sent to her by the Lord. What this prophet told her next may seem surprising to those today who do not understand the principle of faith.

"Fear not," he said to her, "but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son."

Can you imagine what she must have thought? what she must have felt? She hardly had time to reply when the man continued, "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

The woman, after hearing this prophetic promise, went in faith and did as Elijah had directed. "And she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah."⁴

Modern failure to exercise faith

In the wisdom of our day, the prophet's request may seem unfair and selfish. In the wisdom of our day, the widow's response may appear foolish and unwise. That is largely because we often learn to make decisions based upon what we see. We make decisions based on the evidence before us and what appears to be in our immediate best interest.

"Faith," on the other hand, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of

things not seen."⁵ Faith has eyes that penetrate the darkness, seeing into the light beyond. "Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."⁶

Too often today we do not rely on faith so much as on our own ability to reason and solve problems. If we become ill, modern medicine can work healing miracles. We can travel great distances in a short time. We have at our fingertips information that 500 years ago would have made the poorest man a prince.

Three imperatives of true faith

"The just shall live by faith,"⁷ we are told in holy writ. I ask again, What is faith?

Faith exists when absolute confidence in that which we cannot see combines with action that is in absolute conformity to the will of our Heavenly Father. Without all three—first, absolute confidence; second, action; and third, absolute conformity—without these three, all we have is a counterfeit, a weak and watered-down faith. Let me discuss each of these three imperatives of faith.

Have confidence in that which we cannot see

First, we must have confidence in that which we cannot see. When Thomas finally felt the prints of the nails and thrust his hand into the side of the resurrected Savior, he confessed that he, at last, believed.

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."⁸

Peter echoed those words when he praised early followers for their faith in Jesus the Christ. He said:

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."⁹

Act on our faith

Second, for our faith to make a difference, we must act. We must do all that is in our power to change passive belief into active faith, for truly, "faith, if it hath not works, is dead."¹⁰

In 1998, President Gordon B. Hinckley raised a voice of warning to the Saints of this Church as well as to the world at large. He uttered that same warning last night at priesthood meeting. He said:

"I am suggesting that the time has come to get our houses in order. So many . . . people are living on the very edge of their incomes. In fact, some are living on borrowings. . . . I am troubled by the huge consumer installment debt which hangs over the people of the nation, including our own people."¹¹

Brothers and sisters, when these prophetic words were uttered, some faithful members of the Church mustered their faith and heeded the prophet's counsel. They are profoundly grateful today that they did. Others perhaps believed that what the prophet said was true but lacked faith, even as small as a grain of mustard seed. Consequently, some have suffered financial, personal, and family distress.

Align faith with the will of God

Third, one's faith should be consistent with the will of our Heavenly Father, including His laws of nature. The sparrow flying into a hurricane may believe that he can successfully navigate the storm, but the unforgiving natural law will convince him otherwise in the end.

Are we wiser than the sparrow? Often what passes for faith in this world is little more than gullibility. It is distressing to see how eager some people are to embrace fads and theories while rejecting or giving less credence and attention to the everlasting principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is distressing how eagerly some rush into foolish or unethical behavior, believing

that God will somehow deliver them from the inevitable tragic consequences of their actions. They even go so far as to ask for the blessings of heaven, knowing in their hearts that what they do is contrary to the will of our Father in Heaven.

How do we know when our faith conforms to the will of our Heavenly Father and He approves of that which we seek? We must know the word of God. One of the reasons we immerse ourselves in the scriptures is to know of Heavenly Father's dealings with man from the beginning. If the desires of our hearts are contrary to scripture, then we should not pursue them further.

Next, we must heed the counsel of latter-day prophets as they give inspired instruction.

Additionally, we must ponder and pray and seek the guidance of the Spirit. If we do so, the Lord has promised, "I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart."¹²

Only when our faith is aligned with the will of our Heavenly Father will we be empowered to receive the blessings we seek.

One of the grand powers of eternity

Truly understood and properly practiced, faith is one of the grand and glorious powers of eternity. It is a force powerful beyond our comprehension. "Through faith . . . the worlds were framed by the word of God."¹³ Through faith, waters are parted, the sick are healed, the wicked are silenced, and salvation is made possible.

Our faith is the foundation on which all our spiritual lives rest. It should be the most important resource of our lives. Faith is not so much something we believe; faith is something we live.

Remember the words of the Savior: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."¹⁴ "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he

do also; and greater works than these shall he do.”¹⁵

Blessings of walking by faith

Those who walk in faith will feel their lives encompassed with the light and blessings of heaven. They will understand and know things that others cannot. Those who do not walk in faith esteem the things of the Spirit as foolishness, for the things of the Spirit can only be discerned by the Spirit.¹⁶

The manifestations of heaven are sealed from the understanding of those who do not believe. “For if there be no faith among the children of men,” Moroni tells us, “God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith.”¹⁷

Yet throughout history, even in times of darkness there were those who, through eyes of faith, pierced the darkness and beheld things as they truly are. Moroni reveals that “there were many whose faith was so exceedingly strong . . . [they] could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith, and they were glad.”¹⁸

Making our homes havens of faith

Our homes should be havens of faith. Mothers and fathers should teach the principles of faith to their children. Grandparents too can help. When I’m at a family gathering, I try to spend time, when appropriate, to have a one-on-one discussion with some of our grandchildren. I sit with them and ask them a few questions: “How are you doing?” “How is school?”

Then I ask them how they feel about the true Church, which means so much to me. I try to discover the depth of their faith and testimony. If I perceive areas of uncertainty, I’ll ask them, “Would you accept a goal from your granddad?”

Then I’ll suggest they read the scriptures daily and recommend they kneel down every morning and night and pray with their father and mother and have personal prayers. I admonish them to go to their sacrament meetings. I admonish them always to keep themselves pure and clean, always attend their meetings, and finally, among other things, always strive to be sensitive to the whisperings of the Lord.

Now one time after a talk with Joseph, our eight-year-old grandson, he looked into my eyes and asked this pointed question: “May I go now, Granddad?” He ran from my arms and I thought, “Did I do any good?” Apparently I did, because the next day he said, “Thanks for the little talk we had.”

If we approach them with love rather than reproach, we will find that the faith of our grandchildren will increase as a result of the influence and testimony of someone who loves the Savior and His divine Church.

Do not abandon faith during darkness

Sometimes the world appears dark. Sometimes our faith is tried. Sometimes we feel that the heavens are closed against us. Yet we should not despair. We should never abandon our faith. We should not lose hope.

A few years ago I began to notice that things around me were starting to darken. It troubled me because simple things like reading the print in my scriptures were becoming more difficult. I wondered what had happened to the quality of the light-bulbs and wondered why manufacturers today couldn’t make things like they had in years past.

I replaced the bulbs with brighter ones. They too became dim. I blamed the poor design of the lamps and bulbs. I even questioned whether the brightness of the sun was fading before it occurred to me

that the problem might not be with the amount of light in the room—the problem might be with my own eyes.

Shortly thereafter I went to an ophthalmologist who assured me that the world was not going dark at all. A cataract on my eye was the reason the light seemed to be fading. This certainly gives you my age. I placed my faith in the capable hands of this trained specialist, the cataract was removed, and behold, light again flooded my life! The light had never diminished; only my capacity to see the light had been lessened.

This taught me a profound truth. Often when the world seems dark, when the heavens seem distant, we seek to blame everything around us, when the real cause of the darkness may be a lack of faith within ourselves.

Trust in the Lord

Be of good cheer. Have faith and confidence. The Lord will not forsake you.

The Lord has promised if we “search diligently, pray always, and be believing, . . . all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly.”¹⁹

I know, as did Alma of old, that “who-soever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day.”²⁰

Our Heavenly Father is a powerful, moving, directing being. While we may at times bear burdens of sorrow, pain, and grief; while we may struggle to understand trials of faith we are called to pass through; while life may seem dark and dreary—through faith we have absolute confidence that a loving Heavenly Father is at our side.

As the Apostle Paul promised, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”²¹

And one day we will fully see through the darkness into the light. We will understand His eternal plan, His mercy, and His love.

“When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”

Perhaps as members of the Church trust with all their hearts, transform their hopes and beliefs into action, and seek to align themselves with the will of the Lord, the answer to the question the Savior asked 2,000 years ago will be a resounding “Yes, He will find faith. He will find faith among those who take upon themselves His name. He will find it among those who are living His divine principles.”

I testify that through our prophet, seer, and revelator, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to all of us today. I testify that the gospel was restored in its fulness through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Faith, an eternal power, is a gift from our Heavenly Father for all mankind. To this eternal truth I bear my personal witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 18:8.
2. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (1993), “Faith,” 418.
3. Bible Dictionary, “Faith,” 669–70.
4. Sec 1 Kings 17:11–16.
5. Hebrews 11:1; see also Hebrews 11:2–40; Ether 12:7–22.
6. 1 Corinthians 2:5.
7. Romans 1:17.
8. John 20:29.
9. 1 Peter 1:8–9.
10. James 2:17.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
13. Hebrews 11:3.
14. Mark 9:23.
15. John 14:12.
16. See 1 Corinthians 2:14.
17. Ether 12:12.
18. Ether 12:19.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
20. Alma 36:3.
21. Romans 5:1.

Elder Richard G. Scott

The Savior can free us of heavy burdens

Many of you suffer needlessly from carrying heavy burdens because you do not open your hearts to the healing power of the Lord. May this message encourage you to feel the prompting of the Holy Ghost to make those changes that will lead you to be free of oppressive burdens. The Savior has promised, "I will . . . ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that . . . you cannot feel them . . . ; and this will I do . . . that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions."¹

I will first speak to you who suffer because of your own wrong choices; then I will give suggestions for you who anguish for what others have done to you.

A man burdened by sin

Seated across from me was a despondent man, head buried in hands, sobbing from the inevitable consequences of repeated violations of the commandments of God. He anguished, "I don't know what to do. Everything is pressing in on me. I'm tired of running. There is no peace, no happiness. When I pray, no one is listening. What's the use?"

I have known him for a long time. His parents and others have tried to give him guidance—with little success. Because of his choices, he has become separated from the truths that would help him. He has not cultivated faith in the Master nor in the power of prayer. His decisions are centered on what will quickly satisfy his cravings. He either ignores problems or lies about them. He has manipulated the generosity of parents and friends to attempt a quick fix to challenges. He does not evaluate the consequences of today's decisions on tomorrow's life.

As my heart sorrowed for him, I realized he does not see the world as it really

is—a place of joy and happiness, of true friendships, where faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His teachings invite the Holy Ghost to prompt correct decisions. He lives in an environment dominated by the influence of Satan. He has not followed sound counsel, because in his world he cannot see how it would possibly work for him. This distorted view of life is reality to him. It was forged as he succumbed to the subtle temptations of "Go ahead. Try it. Nobody will ever know. It's your life. Live it the way you want to. They can't force you. You have your moral agency."

These promptings and the allure of the forbidden led him down a path that seemed fascinatingly attractive. He was carried on the crest of the wave of appetite and passion, oblivious to the consequences until the inevitable crushing encounter with the laws of God occurred. That produced pain, remorse, and regret. Then Satan provided other direction: "There is no way back. You might as well keep doing what you've been doing. It's hopeless to try to change." Because of his sins, he cannot see a way out of his failures. He will not see the tools needed for a new life in his current environment. His tragic, confining world has been created by the violation of eternal law, motivated by desire for a quick response.

Breaking the chains of sin

Do you find yourself in a similar circumstance? Have you done things that you wish you had not done? Is it difficult for you to see any way to solve your problems? Does there seem to be an oppressive, crushing weight that's always there no matter how you seek to shake it? Under the influence of powerful emotions or stimulants, you may have periods where there seems to be relief. Yet in the quiet moments of reflection that inevitably will come, you realize that your life is not what

you want it to be. You may publicly complain that your friends and even the Lord have abandoned you, but in times of sober reflection you realize it is you who have abandoned them. Oh, please decide now to find the way back to the refreshing peace and joy that can replace the fleeting pleasures of sin and the subsequent agony and emptiness. You have confirmed what the scriptures teach: "Wickedness never was happiness."² Earn enduring joy now from a clean and purposeful life.³

I know that you can escape the controlling influence of the evil one and the repressive chains that bind your life. That relief will require you to accept a solution that is likely foreign to your current personal experience. It will require you to exercise faith in Father in Heaven, who loves you. While you may not understand why now, you must trust that the Savior has given His life so that you can make the required changes in your life—changes that will bring peace and the elusive success that always seem beyond your reach. Believe that you can overcome the depressing environment in which you live by trusting that there is a better way. You must seek the help of others who understand and live that better way, even though you cannot see it now. This will require you to learn and obey the teachings of the Lord. Once you have fully committed yourself to that change, you will find that it is not as difficult as it now may seem.

The painful consequences of sin were purposely put in His plan of happiness by a compassionate Father in Heaven so that you need not follow that tragic path in life. A sinner will not only suffer in this life, but sins that have not been forgiven through true repentance will cause anguish beyond the veil.⁴

The cleansing process of repentance

Satan strives to convince one that sins can be hidden from others, yet it is he who causes them to be revealed in the most

compromising circumstances. His objective is the enslavement of God's children. All of his enticing, alluring temptations have as their root the destruction of the individual. In fact, each of us needs consistently to repent and obey so that the gift of the Savior will satisfy the demands of justice for even our small errors of commission or omission.

The Savior will take upon Himself the consequences of your sins as you repent now. If that is not done, in time you will have to suffer for them yourself.

Seek out your bishop. He will show you how to repent and will help you do it. As you pray and act, you will be led to others who will support you.⁵ Repentance is a process of cleansing. It is difficult, but it has an end—a glorious end with peace and refreshing forgiveness and the miracle of a new beginning. Confession of improper acts is an important step, but that is not full repentance. Your bishop will carefully explain what you must do. I will mention two aspects of repentance that bring great healing power. One is found in this declaration of the Master:

"For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

"Nevertheless, he that repents and *does the commandments of the Lord* shall be forgiven."⁶

That scripture emphasizes that the Lord cannot abide sin, but He will forgive the repentant sinner because of His perfect love. It also teaches that not only is it important to keep a commandment you have broken, but by obeying *all* of the commandments you will obtain additional power and support in the process of repentance.

The healing power of the Atonement

Another vital aspect of repentance is to recognize the role of the Savior through His Atonement. Indeed, it is that very Atonement that makes repentance even possible. As you pray and ponder the role

of Jesus Christ as your Savior and Redeemer, you will acquire great motivation and encouragement to help you repent. Follow this example of Alma:

"I was . . . in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But behold, I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul.

" . . . I have told you this that ye may learn wisdom, that ye may learn . . . that there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. Behold, he is the life and the light of the world."⁷

You will be helped by studying the magnificent explanation of the need for repentance and how it can be obtained, as Alma counseled his wayward son, Corianton, in the Book of Mormon.⁸ Through trust in the plan of happiness and the capacity of the Savior to realize His promises, the darkness of sin can be swept away and the joy of a worthy life returned with the trust of loved ones, when earned the Lord's way. Do not blame others for your mistakes. Humbly repent, for it is written, "He offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered."⁹ Please, decide to repent—now.

Forgiving others brings peace

You may be carrying a heavy burden of feeling injured by another who has seriously offended you. Your response to that offense may have distorted your understanding so that you feel justified in waiting for that individual to ask forgiveness so that the pain can leave. The Savior dispelled any such thought when He commanded:

"Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses

standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men."¹⁰

Don't carry the burden of offense any longer. Genuinely ask forgiveness of one that has offended you, even when you consider you have done no wrong. That effort will assuredly bring you peace and will likely begin the healing of serious misunderstandings.

Do not suffer needlessly for others' sins

If you are free of serious sin yourself, don't suffer needlessly the consequences of another's sins. As a wife, husband, parent, or loved one, you can feel compassion for one who is in the gall of bitterness from sin. Yet you should not take upon yourself a feeling of responsibility for those acts. When you have done what is reasonable to help one you love, lay the burden at the feet of the Savior. He has invited you to do that so that you can be free from pointless worry and depression.¹¹ As you so act, not only will you find peace, but you will demonstrate your faith in the power of the Savior to lift the burden of sin from a loved one through his repentance and obedience.

Healing the wounds of abuse

Now to you who have been scarred by the ugly sin of abuse. Mental, physical, or sexual abuse can cause serious, enduring consequences unless healed by the Lord. They may include fear, depression, guilt, self-hatred, and a deepening lack of trust in others that becomes a barrier to healing. Your abuse results from another's unrighteous attack on your moral agency against your will. In justice, the Lord has provided a way for you to overcome the destructive consequences of abuse. That relief can begin with the counsel of parents, priesthood leaders, and, when necessary, the help of competent professionals.

Yet you need not experience a lifetime of counseling. Complete healing will come through your faith in Jesus Christ and His power and capacity, through His Atonement, to heal the scars of that which is unjust and undeserved. You may find that hard to believe with your current feelings. I have witnessed how the Savior has healed aggravated cases of abuse in that way. Ponder the power of the Atonement.¹² Pray to understand how it can heal you.¹³ Seek the aid of your bishop so that the Lord can free you of a burden you did not originate.

In closing, if you have felt impressions to be free of burdens caused by yourself or others, those promptings are an invitation from the Redeemer. Act upon them now. He loves you. He gave His life that you may be free of needless burdens. He will help you do it. I know that He has the power to heal you. Begin now. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Mosiah 24:14.
2. Alma 41:10.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:4, 15–24.
5. See Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 220–21; see also Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 177–90, 201–12, 339–60.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31–32; italics added.
7. Alma 38:8–9.
8. See Alma 39–42.
9. 2 Nephi 2:7; see also Psalm 34:18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 64:9–10; see also Mark 11:25–26; Luke 6:37; Mosiah 26:29–32; 3 Nephi 13:14–15.
11. See Matthew 11:28–30.
12. See John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement* (1882).
13. See Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 43–46; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 31–33.

Elder Kenneth Johnson

Lessons from a childhood experience

I was raised by caring parents in a home where the values taught and practiced prepared the way for my introduction to the Church and an acceptance of gospel principles. I was baptized in the month of August 1959, shortly after my 19th birthday. As I ponder the events that preceded my conversion, my thoughts go back to a childhood experience.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Lyons

Close to the home where I lived as a child was a large house. It was located on beautiful grounds, enclosed by what was to me a towering fence made of wood paneling, probably six feet in height. I recall peeping through holes in the panels where knots of wood had dropped out. It was like looking through a telescope into a different world. The beautifully manicured

lawns, the well-kept flower gardens, and a small orchard provided an idyllic setting for the distinctive dwelling. Unfortunately the opportunity to enjoy the view was always brief due to the vigilant British bulldog that patrolled the gardens and was immediately attracted to anyone standing close to the exterior of the fencing. Even though the fierce dog was confined in the garden, the sound of his sniffing as he approached the fence caused me to retreat in fear as my vivid imagination conjured up a variety of possibilities.

Mr. and Mrs. Lyons, who lived in the home, were schoolteachers. They had a dignified demeanor and seemed to enjoy the privacy that the house setting afforded them. To add to the intrigue, Mr. Lyons had no right hand, using instead a steel hook that protruded below the cuff of his jacket. In my boyish mind, I could imagine Mr. Lyons pursuing me, catching me by

the collar with the hook, and taking me captive.

Access to the apple trees

I recall an August morning when I was 10 or 11 years old, following a night of unusually strong winds, being greeted by friends as I left my home. They were obviously excited by something and inquired, "Did you hear the wind last night?"

When I said that I had, they proceeded to tell me what they had discovered—that the wind had blown down sections of the fencing surrounding the Lyonses' home. I could not understand why this would cause so much excitement and asked them to explain the significance.

They responded with even greater enthusiasm: "We have access to the apple trees!"

I was still very cautious and asked, "But what about Mr. Lyons?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Lyons are not at home; they are away visiting relatives."

"Where is the dog?" I probed.

"The family has placed him in boarding kennels," came the reply.

My friends had certainly carried out detailed research. So, reassured by their words, we headed for our target with all haste. Entering the grounds, we climbed trees and hurriedly plucked fruit, filling our pockets and also the space between our shirts and our bodies. My heart was pounding and my pulse racing, since I feared that any moment the dog or Mr. Lyons, or both, would appear in the garden and apprehend us. We ran from the scene of our trespass to a secluded place in a nearby wooded area and, after regaining our composure, began to consume the apples.

Discomfort of eating bitter spoils

It was August, and the apples were not yet ripe enough to eat. In fact, they had a very bitter taste, but the tartness of these green apples did not deter us as we enthu-

siastically consumed our spoils, acting out of a compulsion I cannot now explain. After devouring a significant number, I contented myself with taking a bite out of each remaining apple and throwing the remnants of the fruit into the nearby bushes. The frivolity diminished as our bodies began to gradually react to the invasion they had experienced. The chemical reaction between my gastric juices and the unripe apples caused me to experience stomach cramps and to feel nauseated.

Filled with remorse

As I sat regretting what I had done, I realized that a feeling within me was producing even more discomfort than the unripe apples. The greater discomfort resulted from the realization that what I had done was wrong.

When my friends had proposed that we invade the garden, I had felt uncomfortable but lacked the courage to say no and so suppressed my feelings. Now, after the deed had been accomplished, I was filled with remorse. To my regret, I had ignored the promptings warning me of the error of my actions.

Still, small voice warns us against evil

Physical barriers and external forces may prevent us from pursuing deviant paths, but there is also a feeling within each of us, sometimes described as a still, small voice,¹ that when recognized and responded to will keep us from succumbing to temptation.

Years later the words of President Boyd K. Packer touched a tender chord within me when he taught, "We cannot set off on a wrong course without first overruling a warning." I thought of that moment and others like it—the impressions and insights that come as we contemplate the consequences of our actions.

The prophet Mormon expands our view of the source of those impressions in these words: "The Spirit of Christ is given

to every man, that he may know good from evil.”²

The proposition that we all have this gift of guidance is supported in the Gospel according to St. John, wherein it is written concerning the Savior that He was “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”³

These stirrings within us originate from a divine source and, when followed, will help to keep us on course, thus protecting us from harmful influences and dangerous detours.

A prompting to resist temptation to smoke

Several weeks after the experience with the apples, I set out to join my friends in the wooded area close to home, anticipating that we would devise some activity or game to play. As I approached them, they were huddled together. I saw smoke rising in the air above them and recognized the aroma of burning tobacco. One of them had obtained a packet of cigarettes, and they were smoking. They invited me to join them, but I declined. They persisted, suggesting that my reluctance to participate was a sign of weakness. Their taunts turned to ridicule, combined with condescending remarks. But nothing they could say or do could persuade me to change my mind. I had not been raised with a knowledge of the restored gospel and knew nothing of the Word of Wisdom, but I was restrained by a feeling within that I should not participate with them.

As I walked home reflecting on the decision I had made, I felt good inside. Although my expectations for the day had not materialized and I would have to find a way to occupy my time without my friends, I had discovered something about myself—about the source of real happiness and the invigoration that results from making the right decision, whatever the circumstances or outcome may be.

Hearken to the Spirit

Revelation received by Joseph Smith the Prophet describes the benefits associated with adhering to this inherent compass in this passage of scripture:

“And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.”⁴

Not only does this verse provide a further witness that we all have access to this source of divine direction, it also emphasizes the need for us to hearken, or listen and respond, to the promptings we receive. The promise that follows is of great significance to me:

“And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father.”⁵

These intimations, sometimes referred to as conscience but more accurately defined as the Light of Christ, not only help us in deciding what is right and what is wrong, but they will, if followed, lead us to the source of that light which emanates from the presence of the Father and the Son.⁶

The Savior promised His disciples: “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth.”⁷ He further describes this gift as “the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost.”⁸ One may experience manifestations of the Holy Ghost, but the gift is conferred and can be received only by the laying on of hands following baptism.⁹

I have come to more fully appreciate why it is written of His disciples on the Western Hemisphere, “They did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them.”¹⁰

He is the consummate courier of truth.

Holy Ghost guides us, reveals God's ways

As I have looked back over my life, it is clear to me that many decisions—some seemingly small at the time and others with which I have wrestled, recognizing their import—have caused me to climb to higher planes than I would have reached if I had not yielded to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.¹¹

Without this glorious gift, we cannot comprehend the purpose of life or the great plan of the Eternal Father.¹² For “it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him.”¹³

Relying on logic and exercising intellect will not suffice: “Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him.”¹⁴

Gratitude for the gift of the Holy Ghost

I cannot find words to adequately express my feelings concerning the Light of Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost. They are as “a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”¹⁵

Consider the petition of the Savior to the Father concerning the twelve disciples in the land of Bountiful, expressed in these words:

“Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world.

“Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words.”¹⁶

In this turbulent, troubled world, we can find assurance and enjoy peace of conscience by believing the words of the prophets and through the companionship of the

Comforter. Thus we may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world.¹⁷

I declare my witness of these truths in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist (1987), 250.
2. Moroni 7:16.
3. John 1:9.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 84:47.
6. See Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 60.
7. John 14:15–17.
8. John 14:26.
9. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. (1957–66), 2:154; see also Acts 2:38; 8:12–17; 19:1–6.
10. 3 Nephi 19:9.
11. See Mosiah 3:19; Moroni 7:13.
12. See Alma 34:9.
13. Jacob 4:8.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 76:116.
15. Psalm 119:105; see also *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:149–51.
16. 3 Nephi 19:20–21.
17. See 1 Corinthians 12:3; Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 243.

President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Claudio R. M. Costa of the Seventy will address us, and he will be followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa

The difference between fun and happiness

About four months ago I received the assignment to serve in Bogotá, Colombia, and moved there. One day, as I was trying to find the way to my new ward's meeting-house, I stopped at a park to ask for directions.

I could see many families enjoying a pleasant sunny morning. I stood there for a while, watching the children as they cheerfully played in the park. They had a special glow in their countenances; their cheeks were flushed from the sun and from the effort they made to run and play together. They were all very friendly with each other.

I could tell they were really having fun. As I watched them closely, I realized that, more than having a fun time, those pure little children were truly happy.

Later, as I was driving to the chapel, my thoughts went back to the time I was baptized in the Church. An old friend of mine came to me and asked what I had found so different there. I answered, "I have found true happiness." To which he replied, "There is no such thing as true happiness—only happy moments."

I understand that my good friend did not know the difference between *fun* and *happiness*. What he called "happy moments" were in fact the moments when he had fun. What he did not know then was that happiness is much more than just fun. Fun is just a fleeting moment, but happiness is a lasting thing.

Many people in this world do not understand the difference between fun and happiness. Many try to find happiness by having fun, but the two words have different meanings.

I looked them up in the dictionary to find out what each of them meant. *Fun* is play, pleasure, gaiety, merriment, source of enjoyment, amusement, to behave play-

fully, playful, often a noisy activity, and teasing. *Happiness* is contentedness, joy, delight, and satisfaction.

I was taught, after becoming a member of the Church, that there is indeed a big difference between fun and happiness. I learned, even before my baptism, that the Lord has a plan of salvation for all His children (see 2 Nephi 2:9). Through this plan, depending on what we accomplish here on earth, we shall return to our Heavenly Father's presence and live with Him forever in a state of eternal happiness.

Both fun and happiness are fine, but certainly happiness is the most worth seeking. Happiness can encompass fun, but fun alone will not ensure true happiness.

Prodigal son learns about happiness

In Luke, chapter 15, we find the parable of the prodigal son. In this parable the younger son asks the father to give him his share of the inheritance. The father does so, and this young man goes out into the world, seeking what he believes to be true happiness. He starts to have fun, and for as long as he has money, he is surrounded by many people who claim to be his friends. When his fortune is totally wasted with all the fun he has had with his so-called friends, all of them turn their backs on him, and he is left without a penny. He then goes through much suffering and disappointment. He starts working for a man feeding swine, and, starving, he tries to eat even the husks that the swine would eat. He thinks of his father's servants, who have enough bread to eat and to spare, and he does not have anything to eat.

He decides to return home to his father and ask him for a job as one of his hired servants. He returns, repentant from all he has done, and his father, a righteous man, greets him as a special son. He finally

understands that true happiness is there, in that simple life with his family.

True happiness comes from obedience

All who seek full happiness can find it in the gospel of Jesus Christ, taught in His Church. Through Christ's doctrine, we are taught that we can be part of the great plan of happiness that He has prepared for all of us, His sons and daughters. As we keep His commandments, we are blessed and come to know true happiness. We learn that happiness lies in doing small things that build us up, that increase our faith and testimony—small things we do in our everyday lives, such as:

We are happy as we pray every morning and every night, when we can feel that the Lord hears us and is always willing to bless, forgive, and help us. We are happy as we feel the promptings of the Holy Ghost in our lives—as we feel the Spirit when we have to make important life decisions. We are happy as we go home after a stressful and tiresome day at work to the arms of our families, as they express love and appreciation for us. We are happy to talk to our children, to enjoy the family, to get together on family night. In short, we can feel happiness every day in our lives through little things we do, and we are fully happy as we keep the commandments of a loving God, who cares about us.

True happiness comes from keeping the commandments of God. We are taught in 2 Nephi 2:25 that "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy," or, in other words, that they might be happy.

A young man illustrates true happiness

I have witnessed this happiness in the lives of many members of the Church. Several weeks ago I had the assignment to preside over a stake conference in Cali, Colombia. I met a very special young man

there who is a member of the Church and can well illustrate the meaning of true happiness.

His name is Fabián. His family belongs to the Church, and he learned of the plan of happiness when he was just a little boy. In 1984, when he was three years old, Fabián and his family lived in a house close to a large and busy avenue. That avenue was a route for many city bus lines.

One day, seeing the gate open, little Fabián tried to cross the avenue and got hit by a bus. Thanks to Heavenly Father's goodness, Fabián survived the accident. His parents took him to three different hospitals that indicated they could not treat him. They continued looking for help, and, upon finding the proper medical assistance, they learned the prognosis was not very good. After performing multiple surgeries, the doctors informed the family that the damage to his feet and legs was so extensive that to save him, they had to amputate his right leg.

Little Fabián started a different life then, without one of his legs. He slowly learned to control his body balance and to walk with the help of crutches. He went to school and had the support of his teachers and friends. Some people used to mock him, but he soon learned not to care about the jokes they played on him.

He wanted to participate in all physical activities and did so frequently. Even though winning was very hard to come by, he was always brave and ready to participate.

Fabián currently serves as a counselor in his stake Young Men organization. He attends institute of religion classes and is active in the student body organization. He plays basketball and soccer. He also plays Ping-Pong with his friends from the institute. He rides a bike and does everything a young man can do. He works as a volunteer teaching English at a foundation that cares for poor children.

Fabián wants to serve his fellowmen and God with all his strength. He has a smiling face and is always there to help those in need. He is truly a happy young man. With an overwhelming strength that comes from his faith and trust in God, Fabián is a great example to the citizens of his hometown.

His happiness comes from striving to live worthily every day and to obey God's commandments. He reminds me of a scripture found in Mosiah 2:41:

"And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it."

Being obedient to God's commandments, we will live happily for all eternity. Alma said in Alma 41:10 that "wickedness never was happiness."

An invitation to happiness

As a servant of God and as a member of His Church, I invite you to be truly happy by giving heed to His counsel, by living His commandments, and by obeying the words of His living prophets.

I know that one of the factors that greatly influences our happiness is listening to the counsel of the living prophets who teach us in this Church.

I have a testimony that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. He gave His precious life for each one of us. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. This I know with all my heart. I know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God and that it can lead us to the pathways of happiness.

I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet of God today and that he teaches with love and patience how we can be happy in this life and in the life to come.

These things are part of my testimony of the truth, and I share them with you, my brothers and sisters, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin

Keeping your dish right side up

As we meet with Church members around the world, one challenge seems universal: having enough time to do everything that needs doing. Among those who have few resources, the need is for more time to secure the necessities of life. Among those who have sufficient, the need is for more time to attend to the niceties of life. The challenge is daunting because time is fixed; man can neither lengthen out the day nor extend the year.

The world is the culprit. As the world grapples with more efficient ways of man-

aging time, it lures us into more and more earthly pursuits. But life is not a struggle with time—it is a struggle between good and evil.

What to do about all this can be one of the more vexing decisions in life. In 1872, the prophet Brigham Young counseled the Saints on this very subject. Said he:

"Stop! Wait! When you get up in the morning, before you suffer yourselves to eat one mouthful of food, . . . bow down before the Lord, ask him to forgive your sins, and protect you through the day, to preserve you from temptation and all evil,

to guide your steps aright, that *you may do something that day that shall be beneficial to the kingdom of God on the earth*. Have you time to do this? . . . This is the counsel I have for the Latter-day Saints to day. Stop, do not be in a hurry. . . . You are in too much of a hurry; you do not go to meeting enough, you do not pray enough, you do not read the Scriptures enough, you do not meditate enough, *you are all the time on the wing, and in such a hurry that you do not know what to do first*. . . . Let me reduce this to a simple saying—one of the most simple and homely that can be used—‘Keep your dish right side up,’ so that when the shower of porridge does come you can catch your dish full.”¹

Seek first to establish Zion

Use the gospel plan to set proper priorities. The Lord instructed, “Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God [or Zion], and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”²

When I was a young boy growing up in southern Utah, the concepts of Zion were much less clear to me than they are today. We lived in a small town not far from Zion National Park. In church we often sang the familiar words:

Israel, Israel, God is calling,
Calling thee from lands of woe.
Babylon the great is falling;
God shall all her tow'rs o'erthrow.
Come to Zion, come to Zion
Ere his floods of anger flow.
Come to Zion, come to Zion
Ere his floods of anger flow.³

In my little-boy mind, I saw the magnificent cliffs and towering stone pinnacles of that national park. Meandering through the high-walled canyons flowed a river of water—sometimes placid, sometimes a

raging torrent. You can probably imagine the confusion experienced as this little boy tried to put together the words of the hymn with the familiar surroundings of that beautiful park. Though it was not a perfect fit, lodged in my mind was the impression that Zion was something majestic and divine. Over the years a grander understanding has emerged. In the scriptures we read, “Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—the pure in heart.”⁴

Blessings of seeking to establish Zion

The establishment of Zion should be the aim of every member of this Church. It can be safely said: *As we seek with all our hearts to bring forth and establish Zion, the vexations of too little time will disappear*. There are joys and blessings by enlisting in this noble cause. One's personal life is transformed. The home is no longer a hotel but a place of peace, security, and love. Society itself changes. In Zion, contentions and disputations cease, class distinctions and hatreds disappear, no one is poor—spiritually or temporally, and all manner of wickedness is no more. As many have attested, “Surely there could not be a happier people among all the people . . . created by the hand of God.”⁵

Be of one heart; set aside selfishness

The ancient prophet Enoch labored many years to bring his people to this state of righteousness. Like us, they also lived in a time of wickedness, wars, and bloodshed. But the righteous people responded, “And the Lord called his people Zion, *because* they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.”⁶

Take special note of the word *because* in this scripture. Zion is established and flourishes *because* of the God-inspired lives and labors of its citizens. Zion comes

not as a gift but because virtuous covenant people are drawn together and build it. President Spencer W. Kimball said, "As we sing together 'Come to Zion,' we mean . . . come to the ward, the branch, the mission, the stake, and give assistance to build up Zion."⁷ Thus gathered in the Lord's appointed way, Latter-day Saints conscientiously strive to bring forth Zion as the "kingdom of our God and his Christ,"⁸ preparatory to the Lord's Second Coming.⁹

President Hinckley has reminded us that "this cause in which we are engaged is not an ordinary cause. It is the cause of Christ. It is the kingdom of God our Eternal Father. It is the building of Zion on the earth."¹⁰

"If we are to build that Zion of which the prophets have spoken and of which the Lord has given mighty promise, we must set aside our consuming selfishness. We must rise above our love for comfort and ease, and in the very process of effort and struggle, even in our extremity, we shall become better acquainted with our God."¹¹

Foundational truths for building Zion

Among the doctrines that give rise to this highest order of priesthood society are *love, service, work, self-reliance, consecration, and stewardship*.¹² To better understand how we can build Zion on these foundational truths, let us consider four of them.

Love

The first is *love*.

"Jesus said . . . , Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."¹³

To love God more than anything else impels us to take control of our priorities and order our lives so as to be in accord with Him. We come to love all of God's creations, including our fellowman. Placing God first in all things kindles greater love and devotion between husband and wife, parents and children. In Zion, we find "every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God."¹⁴

Work

Next is *work*. Work is physical, mental, or spiritual effort. The Lord commanded, "By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."¹⁵ Work is the source of happiness, self-esteem, and prosperity. In the economy of God, there is no room for chicanery and greed. Work is to be honest toil with this overarching, divine purpose: "The laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish."¹⁶

Self-reliance

Self-reliance comes next. It is the harbinger of personal agency and security. The Lord has commanded this Church and its people to be prepared, self-reliant, and independent.¹⁷ Times of plenty are times to live providently and lay up in store. Times of scarcity are times to live frugally and draw on those stores.

"No true Latter-day Saint, while physically or emotionally able, will voluntarily shift the burden of his own or his family's well-being to someone else. So long as he can, under the inspiration of the Lord and with his own labors, he will . . . supply himself and his family with the spiritual and temporal necessities of life."¹⁸

We are sons and daughters of God and truly dependent upon Him for all that we have. If we keep His commandments, He will never forsake us. But Heavenly Father does not do for us what we can

and should do for ourselves. He expects us to use the means we receive of Him to care for ourselves and our families. When we do so, we are self-reliant.¹⁹

Consecration

Lastly, *consecration*. The covenant of consecration encompasses sacrifice; circumscribes *love, work, and self-reliance*; and is fundamental to establishing God's kingdom. "Zion cannot be built up," the Lord said, "unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom."²⁰ The covenant of consecration is central to this law. We shall one day apply it in its fulness. This covenant embraces the "giving of one's time, talents, and means to care for those in need—whether spiritually or temporally—and in building the Lord's kingdom."²¹

A work with a great destiny

These principles of *love, work, self-reliance, and consecration* are God given. Those who embrace them and govern themselves accordingly become pure in heart. Righteous unity is the hallmark of their society. Their peace and harmony become an ensign to the nations. Said the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; . . . it is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory [of Zion], . . . a work that is destined to bring about the destruction of the powers of darkness, the renovation of the earth, the glory of God, and the salvation of the human family."²²

I bear witness that these things are true. President Gordon B. Hinckley is God's prophet on the earth, as was Joseph Smith Jr. The kingdom of God is The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and will become Zion in all her beauty. Christ is the Savior of the world, the Beloved Son of the living God, the Holy One. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Deseret News*, 5 June 1872, 248; italics added.
2. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
3. "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling," *Hymns*, no. 7.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 97:21.
5. See 4 Nephi 1:16; see also verses 1–18.
6. Moses 7:18; italics added.
7. In Conference Report, Paris Area Conference 1976, 3.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 105:32; see also 68:25–31; 82:14; 115:1–6.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 65:2, 6.
10. In Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 53.
11. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 59.
12. See Spencer W. Kimball, "'And the Lord Called His People Zion,'" *Ensign*, Aug. 1984, 2–6.
13. Matthew 22:37–40.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 82:19.
15. Moses 4:25; see also Genesis 3:19.
16. 2 Nephi 26:31.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 78:13–14; 38:29–31.
18. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 120; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 79; see also 1 Timothy 5:8.
19. See *Providing in the Lord's Way: A Leader's Guide to Welfare* (welfare handbook, 1990), 5.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 105:5.
21. Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, Aug. 1984, 4.
22. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 231–32; italics added.

Elder F. Melvin Hammond

Aaronic Priesthood Duty to God program

A short while ago, Elder Pace, Elder Condie, and I met with the First Presidency. As we entered the room, President Hinckley looked carefully at us and then with a smile on his face said, "How can three white-headed old men be the Young Men presidency of this Church?" Our only response was, "Because you called us to be, President."

Young men, we hope that you are excited about the Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God program. It has been introduced to all the Aaronic Priesthood throughout the world. It is designed to bless you spiritually, physically, socially, and mentally. The requirements are meaningful and will stretch you almost to the limits of your capability. You will be able to establish personal goals and achieve them with the help of your parents and your great leaders. There is a wonderful excitement associated with this program all over the Church. We want *every one of you* to qualify and receive the coveted Duty to God Award.

Dad, are you awake?

Many years ago I took our only son on his first camping-fishing trip. He was just a boy. The canyon was steep, and the descent was difficult. But the fishing was good. Every time I hooked a fish, I would give the pole to the eager boy, and with shouts of joy he would reel in a beautiful trout. In the shadows and coolness of the late afternoon, we began our climb back up to the rim high above us. He scrambled rapidly up the mountain ahead of me with a challenging, "Come on, Dad. I'll bet I can beat you to the top." The challenge was heard but wisely ignored. His small frame seemed literally to fly over, under,

and around every obstacle, and when every step that I took seemed ridiculously like my last, he had reached the top and stood cheering me on.

After supper we knelt in prayer. His small voice rose sweetly heavenward in benediction to our day. Then we climbed into our large double sleeping bag, and after a bit of pushing and pulling I felt his little body snuggle and settle tightly against mine for warmth and security against the night. As I looked at my son beside me, suddenly I felt a surge of love pass through my body with such force that it pushed tears to my eyes. And, at that precise moment, he put his little arms around me and said, "Dad?"

"Yes, son."

"Are you awake?"

"Yes, my son, I am awake."

"Dad, I love you a million, trillion times!"

And immediately he was asleep. But I was awake far into the night, expressing my great thanks for such wonderful blessings clothed with a little boy's body.

Now my son is a man with a son of his own. Once in a while the three of us go fishing. I look at my little redheaded grandson beside his father, and I see in my mind's eye the image of that wonderful moment long ago. The question so innocently asked, "Dad, are you awake?" still rings in my heart.

Determining whether fathers are awake

To every father I pose the same penetrating question, "Dad, are you awake?" Do your sons ever wonder if you are asleep when it comes to the things that are most important to them? I would suggest that there are several areas that would indicate whether we are "awake" or "asleep" in the eyes of our sons.

Magnify your responsibility as patriarch

First, our love for God and accepting our role as the family leader in keeping His commandments. Some years ago, following a stake conference, I felt impressed to pay a visit to a priesthood brother who had fallen away from the Church. We found him working in his garden. I approached him and said, "Dear brother, the Lord Jesus Christ has sent me to see you. I am Elder Hammond, one of His servants."

We exchanged a Latin *abrazo* and entered into his lovely little home. He called for his wife and three children to join us. Two handsome young men and a beautiful girl sat beside their father and mother. I asked the children what they would like, more than anything else in the world, right now. The oldest son spoke: "If only all of us could go back to church as a family, we would be so happy—so grateful." We told them how much they were needed by the Savior and how He loved them. We bore our testimonies to them and then knelt in prayer. The father prayed. The mother wept. They are now back in full fellowship. The children are proud of their father, and they are happy.

Every father in the Church should function as the patriarch of his home. He should take the lead in spiritually guiding the family. He ought not to delegate or abrogate his responsibilities to the mother. He should call for family prayer, family home evening, scripture reading, and occasional father's interviews. He is the protector, the defender, and the kindly source of discipline.

It is the father who should lead, unify, and solidify the family unit by accepting the priesthood of God and responding to the calls and privileges associated with priesthood authority. His relationship with God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is one of

the beacons which will lead his sons and daughters through the stormy shoals of life.

If Dad is a true disciple of Jesus Christ, then the sons will follow him as the night the day. "Dad, are you awake?"

Honor and respect your wife

Second, the relationship we have with our wives—their mothers. Considering everything else we do, the way we treat our wives could well have the greatest impact on the character of our sons. If a father is guilty of inflicting verbal or physical abuse in any degree on his companion, his sons will resent him for it, perhaps even despise him for it. But interestingly enough, when they are grown and marry, they are likely to follow the same pattern of abuse with their wives. There is an urgent need in our society for fathers who respect their wives and treat them with sweet, tender love.

Recently I heard of a father who foolishly called his beautiful, intelligent wife "stupid" and "dumb" in a most degrading manner for some small mistake she innocently made. The children listened, embarrassed and frightened for their mother. She was belittled in front of those that she loved most. Although an apology and forgiveness were expressed, there still remained the hurt and shame of a senseless moment.

The Spirit of the Lord cannot be expected to bless our lives if we persist in being angry, callous, and cruel to our mates. We cannot expect our sons to develop respect and gentleness toward their mothers if we do not provide them a proper example. President David O. McKay said, "The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother" (quoted from Theodore Hesburgh, *Reader's Digest*, Jan. 1963, 25; in *Richard Evans' Quote Book* [1971], 11).

"Dad, are you awake?"

Discipline with love

Third, to provide discipline that is just and is administered with love. Too often, out of our own frustration and weakness, we raise our hands to strike our children, usually in an attempt to protect our own selfish pride. Every child needs to be disciplined. Not only do they need it; they expect it; they want it. Discipline gives direction and teaches self-control, but in all discipline there should be a sense of righteous judgment and pure love.

When I was a little boy, my widowed mother gave me the most severe discipline possible. She said, with tears in her eyes, "My son, I am so disappointed in you." The pain in my heart was more than I could bear. A thousand lashes could not have cut me so deeply. I knew that such a rebuke could only have been made to me out of her pure love, for if there was one thing that I was certain of, it was that my mother loved me. I resolved never again to be subject to the disappointment and the broken heart of an angel mother. I believe that I have succeeded in that resolve.

When it comes to discipline, "Dad, are you awake?"

Help sons become men of honor, respect

Dads, it is imperative that the challenges I have mentioned be mastered in our lives if our sons are to be spiritually and emotionally mature. If we do, then they will not be ashamed of us, nor will they ever be ashamed of themselves. They will become men of honor, respect, full of love, willing to serve the Savior and submit their will to Him. Then we will rejoice

in the fact that they are ours forever. They will say, "Dad, are you awake?"

And we will respond, "Yes, my son, I am awake."

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they provided this afternoon.

Likewise we thank all who have assisted in any way: our city officials, for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; and the ushers and interpreters.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and the operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries of the world.

As you leave the conference, once again we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "We Ever Pray for Thee." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Gerald L. Taylor of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley**Each a better person**

What a wonderful conference this has been, my brothers and sisters. As we

return to our homes and to our daily activities, each of us should be a better individual than we were when the conference opened.

All who have spoken have done very well. The prayers have been inspirational. The music has been magnificent.

But what matters most is what may have occurred within each of us as a result of our experience. I, for one, have made a stronger resolution within myself to be a better person than I have been in the past. I hope that I will be a little kinder to any I meet who may be in distress. I hope that I will be a little more helpful to those who are in need. I hope that I will be a little more worthy of your confidence. I hope that I will be a better husband, a better father and grandfather. I hope that I will be a better neighbor and friend. I hope that I will be a better Latter-day Saint, with an increased understanding of the wonderful aspects of this glorious gospel.

I challenge every one of you who can hear me to rise to the divinity within you. Do we really realize what it means to be a child of God, to have within us something of the divine nature?

I believe with all my heart that the Latter-day Saints, generally speaking, are good people. If we live by the principles of the gospel, we must be good people, for we will be generous and kind, thoughtful and tolerant, helpful and outreaching to those in distress. We can either subdue the divine nature and hide it so that it finds no expression in our lives, or we can bring it to the front and let it shine through all that we do.

Room for improvement

There is room for improvement in every life. Regardless of our occupations, regardless of our circumstances, we can improve ourselves and while so doing have an effect on the lives of those about us.

We do not need to wear our religion on our sleeves. We certainly do not need to be boastful about it or to be arrogant in any way. Such becomes a negation of the Spirit of the Christ, whom we ought to try to emulate. That Spirit finds expression

in the heart and the soul, in the quiet and unboastful manner of our lives.

All of us have seen those we almost envy because they have cultivated a manner that, without even mentioning it, speaks of the beauty of the gospel they have incorporated in their behavior.

We can lower our voices a few decibels. We can return good for evil. We can smile when anger might be so much easier. We can exercise self-control and self-discipline and dismiss any affront levied against us.

Let us be a happy people. The Lord's plan is a plan of happiness. The way will be lighter, the worries will be fewer, the confrontations will be less difficult if we cultivate a spirit of happiness.

Work harder to succeed in our homes

Let us work a little harder at the responsibility we have as parents. The home is the basic unit of society. The family is the basic organization of the Church. We are deeply concerned over the quality of the lives of our people as husbands and wives and as parents and children.

There is too much of criticism and faultfinding with anger and raised voices. The pressures we feel each day are tremendous. Husbands come home from their employment each day tired and short tempered. Unfortunately, most of the wives work. They too face a serious challenge that may be more costly than it is worth. Children are left to seek their own entertainment, and much of it is not good.

My brothers and sisters, we must work at our responsibility as parents as if everything in life counted on it, because in fact everything in life does count on it.

If we fail in our homes, we fail in our lives. No man is truly successful who has failed in his home. I ask you men, particularly, to pause and take stock of yourselves as husbands and fathers and heads of households. Pray for guidance, for help, for direction, and then follow the whisper-

ings of the Spirit to guide you in the most serious of all responsibilities, for the consequences of your leadership in your home will be eternal and everlasting.

Bring to pass God's eternal purposes

God bless you, my beloved associates. May a spirit of peace and love attend you wherever you may be. May there be harmony in your lives. As I've said to our youth in many areas, be smart, be clean, be true, be grateful, be humble, be prayerful. May you kneel in prayer before the

Almighty with thanksgiving unto Him for His bounteous blessings. May you then stand on your feet and go forward as sons and daughters of God to bring to pass His eternal purposes, each in your own way, is my humble prayer as I leave my love and blessing with you, in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "We Ever Pray for Thee."

Elder Gerald L. Taylor offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A family choir from stakes in the Salt Lake Hunter Area provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Jared L. Dunn directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

An Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Provo, Utah, provided music for

the priesthood session. Andrew Crane directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

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